

4402. 48
Meditations

CONCERNING

DEATH.

By SAM. BOLDE, ^Rector of
Steeple, in Dorsetshire.

*It is appointed unto Men once to Die,
but after this the Judgment, Heb.
9. 27.*

*So teach us to number our days, that we
may apply our Hearts unto Wisdom,
Psal. 90. 12.*

LONDON,

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To the Honorable Hugh
Boscawen, of Tre-
gothnan in Corn-
wal, Esq; and one of His
Majesties most Honora-
ble Privy Council.

William Buller
his Secy.
SIR,

IF these Meditations happen to re-
vive any of those Maturer
Thoughts you have had on former
Occasions, concerning these or the
like Subjects, you will not reckon
them altogether Useless. They were
writ, during the Leisure Bodily
Distempers have afforded me from
other Business; since I had the hap-

The Epistle, &c.

piness to attend your Honour some days. And having Occasion to make them Publick for the Service of other People, I address them to your Honour to signify the grateful Sentiments I have of your most Generous Respects to me, who am your most Obligated, and therefore ought to be

Your Honour's

Most Humble,

Faithful

and Obedient Servant

Sam. Bolde.

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The PREFACE
TO
The READER.

Reader,

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M^R own frequent Indispositions have yielded me abundant occasion, to employ my thoughts about such subjects as are discoursed of in the following Papers. A Distemper which lately prevailed very much in these parts, and cut off multitudes every week in the Neighbouring Parishes, inclined me to publish these Thoughts, in order to the assisting of such as were not provided with better Helps, in applying their Minds to matters which are of undoubted Moment, to people who are at best in a very frail estate, and uncertain what Time they shall have to provide for a better. My long Retirement (if there were nothing else) must needs cause these Discourses to be destitute of that Fineness of Thought, and Turn of Expression; necessary to entertain them who are accustomed to Ingenious Converse. But that which makes them unmeet for persons of such Elevation, may render them more peculiarly adapted to the Genius of the vulgar sort:

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And if it shall please God to make them effectual for the Benefit of the latter, that will be a very ample Satisfaction for my exposing them to Publick View. I shall little regard the Reflections, either Morose or Conceitedly Witty Folk shall be pleased to make on them: Yet if there be anything in these Papers, which either the Learned or the Pious can dislike, I shall endeavour to receive their Instructions, with just degrees both of Candour and Gratitude.

What an excellent Remedy would becoming Thoughts of Death be, to many great Disorders which now prevail amongst us, and threaten us with the last Extremities? How much would they contribute by their good effects to prevent impending Ruine? Sure they would mightily unite the Hearts of the Pious, and make them very Indifferent concerning those pitiful matters, from whence People professing the best Religion, do take occasion to divide themselves into Parties, and to shew themselves Censorious and Ill-humour'd. Things which are such, a fondness for them, may discover the weakness of Good Men, but are fit for none but Designing and Bad men to quarrel about.

It is our Saviours advice to take heed to your selves lest at any time your hearts
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To the READER.

be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares, *Luke 21. 34. unquestionably it will be our wisdom to follow his Counsel. Covetousness doth now screen it self under the name of Religion, the most fatal Disguise that can be; this can conceal people at most but till they die: But would they meditate on Death as they should, it would do much to cure them at present of their worst Distemper, which exposes them to the most fearful Vengeance, Worldly-mindedness. The Love of this World, unless speedy care be taken, will most certainly undo us, and our Country too. The Mahometans have a Story which Christians may make a good use of, viz. That in the days of Jesus, three Men in a Journey happened to find a Treasure, but being very hungry, sent one of the number to buy Provision; he consulted how to get the Treasure to himself, and determined to Poison the Meat; the other two agreed to share the Treasure between them, and to Kill the Third man as soon as he returned; this they did, and presently after they died of the Poysoned meat. Jesus passing by with his Disciples, said, this is the condition of this World, see what the Love of*

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of it hath brought these Men to ! Wo be
 to him that looks for any other usage
 from it. *I wish it may prove an unchari-
 table Suspicion, that some people do hate In-
 temperance and other Scandalous Vices, prin-
 cipally because they are Expensive, and do
 no less dislike some of the most Glorious Vir-
 tues, because they call for Disbursements.*
What a Prodigy is it, that the Root of all
*Evil, should be got into the Garb of Religi-
 on, and become the most fashionable and cre-
 ditable thing that wears even the Christian*
Name ! Are there not some that make a shew
of being Protestants (I could find in my
*heart to say) to a Monstrous degree, who re-
 pute, and talk of Charity as an Old, Wither-*
ed, Heathenish Virtue, or Popish piece of Me-
rit ? Indeed it hath now lost much of its first
Beautiful and Amiable Aspect. It appears in
too many places with a wrinkled, meager
countenance, but they may find the cause of
that in themselves, not because of the nar-
rowness of their Fortunes, but because of the
sordid straitness of their own Spirits. But it
is Barbarous as well as Impious, first to starve
it, and then nick-name and miscall it. And
those do not use it much better, who confine
it only to a Party. How enormously wicked
would they be, who if it were in their pow-
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To the READER.

er, would restrain the Sun from shedding forth its Benign Beams and Influences upon any but those of their own Gang? The more a Sectary (I limit not the Term to any particular perswasion) the less Christian; and by how much the less a Christian, the more uncharitable. Let People call Charity by what Pagan or Antichristian Name they please, by the Account my Bible gives of it, it is a Christian Grace, and a Grace to which a singular Preheminence is assigned. If you take Christ and Charity out of the New Testament, I do not say you leave it a Book on no account to be preferred before some other Books in the World, but I dare affirm in the face of all the World, you do it Infinite Wrong. And if any Man have learnt to separate Christ and Charity, he hath imbib'd a Lesson, I hope no good Christian will ever desire to be acquainted with.

Should Men of Wealth and Estates, from a mean, covetous, worldly Spirit and Principle, make it their business to excuse themselves from bearing an honest Proportion towards the defraying of the Publick Expenses, and lay so heavy a Burthen on the Middle sort of People, as to disable them from exceeding their own scanty Inclinations, if the Occasions of Piety and Charity should
call

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call for an abounding Supply, it would be a good Omen to our Nation, we may pray for better things. Let it pass for a Melancholick Thought of mine, that the Land will spew out many of its wealthy Inhabitants. Yet if the word of God do threaten any thing equivalent to that, against a People in our circumstances, I will not esteem it any presumption, to say positively, that the Sacred Scripture will be fulfilled, whether Rich and Great Men will believe it or no. But let this World go how it will, we must all assuredly e'r long, arrive at another World. May I and every good Man make it our chief care and principal business to provide well for that Time. I am very sensible a Man hath no grateful Prospect before him, whilst he thinks he shall leave his Wife and Children to the Kindness of a selfish, greedy sort of People, who reckon Poverty more Infamous than Vice, and esteem poor People the most hateful objects they can cast their Eyes on; the very Burthen which makes the whole Creation groan, yet I am perswaded a Good Man hath no cause to be much dejected when on his Death-Bed, if he can make his Will as Pious Luther did his, in which there were words to this effect. Lord God, I thank thee that thou hast bin pleased to make me a poor

To the READER.

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poor and Indigent Man on earth; I have
neither House, nor Land, nor Money to
leave behind me. Thou hast given me
Wife and Children, I restore them to thee.
God nourish, teach, and preserve them,
thou hast hitherto done me, O thou
that art a Father of the Fatherless, and a
Judge of the Widows. People do irrepara-
bly and infamously blast and confound their
Designs, instead of fulfilling them, when they
distrust the Divine Goodness and Care, when
they use illegal means to enrich themselves,
and provide for Posterity, when they indulge
a Stingy Pennurious Spirit, scraping together,
and hoarding up all they can get for them-
selves and theirs, refusing to dispense what
they have, with a Liberality answerable to
the occasions with which God doth present
them in the Course of his Providence. Do
those People do much better than Murther
their Children, who provoke God to take
them away in Anger, by using indirect Me-
thods to provide for them, and endeavouring
to swell their Fortunes, by what they call a
Thrifty, but is truly a Sacrilegious Heaping
up for them, what should be laid out for the
Services of Piety, and the relief and comfort
of the miserable? It is possible, yea easy
enough for Persons to Treasure up more
Wrath

The PREFACE, &c.

Wrath and Vengeance for their Families, than they do Wealth and Estates, though these likewise may be very massy, and of great extent. Their immediate Children, or latter Descendants will feed on what is worse than Poyson, when they come to satiate their Lusts, with what should long before have been expended in the Service of Religion, for the succor of the Afflicted, and to supply the Necessities of the Poor and Indigent. I am afraid great Guilt is an Appurtenance of most of the (especially large) Estates, and (stately) Fabricks that be in this Land. And if my fear is not without just ground, the Curse will Infallibly sooner or later, seize on the Possessors of them, except a timely care be taken, to get their enjoyments sanctified unto them. The most certain and effectual course, that I know, they can take for this purpose is, to break off their Sins by Righteousness, and their Iniquities, by shewing Mercy to the Poor. And if the Thoughts of Death will not have this good effect on the Men of Money and Land, I must needs conclude, that Covetousness is as besetting and stupifying Idolatry, as the Worship of Stocks and Stones, and doth us effectually hinder persons from Rational Reflection, as the other did, when the Votaries could not say, Is there not a Lye in my Right Hand?

Now Reader, if you can digest such unembellished Discourse as this, you may proceed to the following Meditations, and shall not be detained any longer by

Your Hearty Servant

Sam. Bolde.

Meditations

CONCERNING

DEATH.

MEDITATION I.

*Concerning DEATH, as it respects
MAN; and some Improvements
we should make of it under that Con-
sideration.*

THOSE who profess them-
selves Christians, do verbal-
ly acknowledge, that every
Man must unavoidably sub-
mit to *Death*, whom God
doth not extraordinarily dispence with,
by his *Sovereign Prerogative*, except those
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who shall be found alive when the Lord *Jesus Christ* shall come to judge the *World*. What a happy Alteration would soon be *visible*, if every one did duly apply this most clear and undeniable *Truth* to his own *Heart*, and do all that becomes *him*, that a firm and serious Belief that he must *die*, may have its proper Influence on his Soul and Practice!

Death comes not always with Observation; it is not constantly attended with a long Train of antecedent *Symptoms*, to warn People solemnly of its approach: It is not appropriated to a certain number of *Years*, or to People's growing up to a particular *Size*: It often cuts off *Life* in the very *Bud*: It is frequently the *Portion* of those who are very little more than a *Span* long. Yet how little do we concern our selves to be prepared for it!

I am apt to suspect our neglect to make a right Improvement of the loud and repeated Calls we have, to think seriously of, and make ready for our own *Dissolution*, by the frequent Notices we receive of other People's dying in all places round about us, doth proceed, in a great measure, from our entertaining

certaining no other *Notion* of *Death*, than that *Term* doth stand for, when used concerning *Dogs*, *Horses*, and other *Brute Beasts*: For were the *true Notion* of *Death*, as it respects *Man*, well settled in our *Minds*, we should hardly hear, or think, or speak of it, but it would make a very considerable *Impression* on our *Spirits*, and have a very powerful *Influence* on our *Lives* and *Carriages*.

Death is so common, every one (almost) is ready to conclude he *knows* well enough what it is for a *Person* to *die*: Those who are most confirmed and hardned in *sottish Ignorance*, are apt to affirm they need not any information about this matter; they know what it is to die, better than any *Words* can teach them; their *Eyes* have instructed them; they have seen multitudes die.

But I fear many have not obtained a *true Notion* of *Death*, though they have been with several when on their *Death-Bed*; though they have seen them breathe out their *last Breath*; though they have looked on their *pale* and *ghastly Visages*, and have assisted in the *closing* of their *Eye-lids*.

The Tremblings and Quiverings, the Groans and Throbs, the Struglings and Convulsions of dying People, may excite a natural Pity and Commiseration; may beget a transient Passion, Sorrow, and Yearning of Bowels in those who do behold and hear them; but these things alone will not furnish with a sound and full Notion of what it is to *die*, as that respects *Man*.

These and such-like Circumstances may be observed in all their degrees in *Brute Creatures*; they are all antecedent to Death; they are but *Bodily Impressions*.

Death (as it respects Man) is the *departure* or separation of the *immortal Soul* from the *Body*, to be assigned to an *eternal Estate of Happiness or Misery*, according to the *righteous Judgment of God*.

It is possible for the Soul occasionally to leave the Body for some time, and afterwards return to, possess, and animate it, as it did before. *St. Paul* was not certain whether it was thus with him, *2 Cor. 12. 2*. It may seem to have been thus in the case of *Lazarus*.

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concerning DEATH. 5

When a Man *dies*, his Soul does not barely leave the Body, but it is to be determined to an *eternity* of Happiness or Misery, by the most *Wise, Good, and Almighty God*, whose Judgment is always according to *Truth and Righteousness*: Then shall the Dust return to the Earth as it was, and the Spirit shall return to God who gave it, Eccles. 12. 7. St. Paul had a desire to depart, that he might be with Christ, Phil. 1. 23. *This day shalt thou be with me* (said our Blessed Saviour to the Penitent) in Paradise, Luke 23. 43. We read that the Beggar died, and was carried by the Angels into Abraham's Bosom; that the rich Man died, and in Hell he lift up his Eyes being in Torments, Luke 16. 22, 23. A Man dies, when his Soul leaving his Body, is determined by God's appointment to an *eternal Estate* of Happiness or Misery, as it was before prepared for the one or the other: In which estate, the Body must, at the Resurrection, for ever share with it, though at the great and solemn Judgment, the Happiness or the Misery will be exceedingly *advanced*, and rendered every way perfect and complete.

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If such a sense or consideration of Death did prevail in our Minds, whenever we hear or speak of it, whenever we are warned to think of it, by the *Decease* or *Funerals* of other People, we should apprehend our selves concerned to be very serious in preparing for *that time*, when not only our Faces will be as *pale*, and our Countenances as *ghastly* as other People's who are dead, or dying, but when our *noblest Part* will be *irreverently* assigned by the Appointment of the most Holy, Just, and Powerful GOD to an *everlasting Estate*.

Let us now be careful to improve this account of *Death*, to such good and useful Purposes, as the serious Consideration of it shall suggest to be *pertinent* and *seasonable*: And more particularly,

First, *To settle in our selves a strong Persuasion that we have immortal Souls, and that we ought to be concerned for them, as well as for our Bodies.* Awake, my Soul! stir up all thy Powers, and now exert thy greatest Strength, that I may be fully convinced, there is something unconceivably more excellent *within* me, than all these gross, material, visible Parts and Organs, which have hitherto
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amused and deceived me! O Father of Spirits! send down the Holy Ghost to shed abroad his Light and Power in me, that I may perceive, and be invincibly perswaded of that noble Part thou hast placed in me, which (how depraved soever it be at present) is still capable, through thy Grace and Goodness, to have thy pure and holy Image imprinted on it. We should apply our selves to a calm, sedate, impartial weighing of those manifold *Evidences* which are afforded to us, to prove our Souls are *immortal*: We must insist on, and steadily exercise our Thoughts about them, 'till we feel such a *Conviction* rise up within our selves, as will not suffer us any longer to be unmindful of our *best Part*, but will influence us to pursue with vigour and diligence those Methods, which have a sure tendency to befriend our Souls both *here* and *for ever*. No wonder that we are really regardless of our Souls, if we content our selves with a bare verbal saying we believe we have *Souls*, and that they are *immortal*, but cannot give any tolerable Reason why we pretend to believe the same; or if we can alledge very substantial Reasons for that Belief, but

have never been at the pains to draw forth their *Strength* and *Vertue*, to convince us effectually of *what* they are proper to prove. The strongest Reasons in the World, taken just as they are, cloathed and wrapp'd up in *Words*, will have no effect; They will not have their due influence on us, 'till we use them to convince us of our *Duty*, or our *Interest*, or *both*. Had we a firm and strong Perswasion that our Souls are immortal, we should certainly understand (at least) something of the *Offices* in which they should be employ'd. Then we should enquire after, and concern our selves in some good proportion, about those things which would contribute most to the Benefit, and Comfort, and Happiness of our Souls.

If our Souls must pass to an eternal Estate, upon their departure from our Bodies, there must (most certainly) be some Acts and Businesses proper for them, which they should exert and be exercised in; there are some things we should attend unto, and seek after, which should be *peculiarly good* to them. Indeed, whilst we are wholly intent upon, and employ our selves in eager Pursuits
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after those things which relate only to our *outward Part*, we defraud our selves of the *best* and greatest part of the *Satisfaction*, *Comfort*, and *Pleasure* we are capable of in this *present Life*.

Sacred *Admiration* of the Divine *Perfections*; holy *Contemplation* of the *Wonders* of *Nature* and *Grace*; devout *Aspirations* and *Breathings* after *Holiness* and *Glory*; spiritual *Celebration* of the manifold *Instances* wherein God hath displayed his *Bounty* and *Goodness*; internal *Ascribing* of *Honour*, *Glory*, and *Power* to our *Great* and *Absolute Sovereign*, paying our *grateful*, *heartly Acknowledgements* and *Praises* to *Him*, for all his *Benefits* and *Favours*, for his *Son*, his *Spirit*, his *Word*, *Promises*, and *Ordinances*; and the glorious *Preparations* made in the *other World*; the *lively* and *vigorous Actings* of *Faith*, *Hope*, *Love*, and other *Graces*, are all peculiar to our *Souls*. These signify no more to our *Eyes*, *Ears*, *Taste*, and *Stomachs*, than *glittering Attire*, *delicious Fare*, *Houses*, *Lands*, and *Moneys*, to do our *spiritual Part*; but the *Delight* and *Pleasure* those forementioned *Acts* and *Exercises* do yield to them who are expert in

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them, are too *great* and *ravishing* to be express'd by *Words*.

Would we improve the Consideration of Death, to put our Souls on exercising themselves in these Ways, with vigour and perseverance, and to make us very earnest and diligent in seeking after Grace and Holiness, and a constant improvement in them, we should make such use of this Consideration, as we should never have occasion to repent of.

But, alas! such is our Folly, we too commonly live as if we thought we were *all Body*. We know we have Bodies, and we are very sensible that our Bodies do consist of several Parts, and we are very tender of every one of them: We do what we can to provide for the defence, safety, ease, comfort, and ornament of every Part; the very Foot is not quite neglected. And all this I do not absolutely blame; yet certainly it is for a *Lamentation*, that any should take more care of their very *Feet*, than they do of their *immortal Souls*. If you were fully perswaded that you have *Souls*, *immortal Souls*, sure you could not be so careless of, and so neglect them as you do. Your Food, your Clothes, your Riches, and
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the common Pleasures of this World, serve only for the Body: And are not these the Things for which you are altogether concerned? What are all these things to your Souls? Doubtless your Souls are not one jot the better, the happier for them; but they are likely to be much more miserable hereafter, because you busie your selves so immoderately for these things now. If you mind no Pleasures here, but those which respect your Bodies, you are never the happier for having *reasonable Souls*; the Soul of a *Dog*, a *Sow*, a *Goat*, or of any *Beast*, might serve your *turn* as well, or better.

If we believe that we have Souls, let us take some care of them; let us bestow some pains to adorn, secure, and improve them. We may use bodily Pleasures; but why do we neglect those of the *Mind* and *Soul*, which are *unconceivably greater*?

Lord! may I know by experience what are the *Ravishments* of a *devout Soul*! When filled with a sense of thy *peculiar Love*! When enlarged in thy *Praises*! When over-flowing with *Divine Joys*! How little account shall I then make of all this *World* can afford! How just an
Esti-

Estimate shall I then set on my *precious Soul*! How shall I then rejoice that my Soul is *immortal*! With what strength of *Desire* shall I then long to take my *Flight* hence, to inherit those *never-fading Pleasures* which will eternally *increase*, and which are to be enjoyed in thy most *Blessed Presence*!

Secondly, *To engage and excite us to provide well at present for our Souls, against the time when they shall live without these Bodies.* Our Souls should be of the greatest Consideration with us, because they will live, when our Bodies will be altogether useless, will grow so loathsome, none of the Living will endure the sight or presence of them. If we be only solicitous to *purvey* for these frail Bodies, which will unavoidably crumble into Dust, and to provide against all Inconveniences incident to us whilst we are in this World, we shall be utterly *unexcusable*. To be wholly regardless of our Souls, and make no provision for them, will involve us in the *grosslest Absurdity* that can be imagined: To take pains for a *decaying Body*, and be unconcerned for the welfare of an *immortal Soul*, is the foulest *Contradiction* to all the Rules of
Discre-

Discretion; yea, to the most common Instructions of ordinary Sense. What Man of common sense will busie himself for what he is sure will presently decay and perish, and be altogether regardless of what he knows he shall have occasion of as long as he lives.

If we provide not at present for the future Happiness of our Souls, we do lay up in store for their Misery and Unhappiness. How sad and dreadful is the state of a departed Soul, destitute of Grace! a Stranger and an Enemy to the Holy God! and without a saving Interest in the Lord Jesus Christ! Labour not for the Meat which perisheth, but for that Meat which endureth to everlasting Life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you; for him hath God the Father sealed, John 6. 27.

I do not condemn, I do commend an honest Care and Diligence in People, to provide for their own and their Families comfortable subsistence: But we have Souls which must not be neglected; some, yea, the choicest of our Thoughts and Labours must be, that their happy and comfortable Subsistence in the future World may be provided for.

But

But, alas! multitudes do wretchedly deceive themselves with a fond Opinion that they have provided *well enough* for their Souls, when indeed they have made no provision at all for their *Welfare*. Would Men but consider what they mean by making provision for themselves and their Families, that they may live comfortably in this World, and apply that Notion to the present point, *viz.* of providing for the Welfare of their Souls hereafter, they might easily undeceive themselves.

Though there be Houses, Estates, and Money enough in the World, we do not think that we and those who belong to us are well enough provided for, 'till we obtain a *Right* to, and *Propriety* in some portion of these things; we do not think that we have made comfortable provision for our *Children*, because we shall leave them in a *plentiful Country*, where there is abundance of every thing they can have occasion of: For what is all this *Plenty* unto them, when they can call none of it their *own*? But when we foresee what they will have occasion of, in order to their comfortable subsistence when we are dead, when we have provided

vided these things for them, and have secured to them a good Title and just Claim to them; so that as soon as we are removed from them, they will have the actual possession of them, or a certain and indisputable Right to them, then we conclude *with Reason*, that we have provided well for them, because we have done all that the *Government* and *Laws* under which we live, do make necessary and expedient to their enjoying such things after our *decease*.

Thus we may inform our selves, in some measure, in what our making *provision* for our Souls against *Hereafter* doth consist in, *viz.* in making sure to them a *just Title* to those Enjoyments in the future *World*, which God hath graciously promised to them, who make it their business to walk at present in *all-pleasing before Him*; so that when they go hence, they shall most certainly be admitted to the fruition of them.

God hath prepared such things in the other *World* for good and pious *Souls*, as will constitute them truly *Blessed*. He hath promised Heaven to all who shall be found qualified and meet for it at their departure, to all who are really in Christ Jesus;

Jesus ; and he hath engaged Himself to conferr *Degrees of Glory* on Persons in Proportion to their improving in their *gracious, regular, and holy Conduct*, and the advance they make at present in some *peculiar Instances of Grace and Duty* he recommends to them. All these are committed into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ, as *Mediator* of the *New Covenant* to dispence and distribute to those who are the real Subjects of his *gracious Government*, according to the *Tenour* of that *Covenant*.

But what will all this avail our Souls when they leave this World, if we in the meantime take no care to secure to them an Interest and Propriety in those *Blessings*, nor have any regard to get our Souls prepared for them ?

Our *Preparation* consists in such a Disposition and *Temper* of Soul, as renders it fit and *meet* to *partake* of, *relish*, and have a *sensation* of the Pleasure and Satisfaction those Objects do afford, and to exert with freedom and complacency those Acts, and perform those Offices which pertain to the *State* wherein those Blessings are to be enjoyed. This Preparation is absolutely necessary to the Soul's being

being well and happy in the other World. Could a Soul, retaining its *envious, malicious, earthly, sensual Disposition*, be admitted amongst the *Saints* above, it would not have any satisfaction, because it could not find any thing there, that had an affinity to, or suitableness with its most *impetuous Inclinations*, but all things as contrary to them, as *Light* is to *Darkness*.

But our making provision for the happiness of our Souls hereafter, doth consist in our doing those things, or performing those *Works*, upon which we have a *Right* and *Title*, and may lay a *just Claim* at our departure hence, to the great and blessed things God hath in *store* for his *People*.

God forbid that I should entertain the least apprehension tending to favour the Doctrine of *Merit* properly taken; that I should think we can do any thing which bears a full *proportion* to the heavenly *Reward*, or is truly commensurate to, and can justify us against the *Covenant* and *Law of Works*: It is only the *Righteousness* of the Lord Jesus Christ, that can answer the *Demands* of that *Law*; and with reference unto it, we are justified
by

by *Faith alone*. We are under the *Law of Works*, 'till we heartily close with the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe in him when we do so, we are, through the Efficacy and Virtue of *Christ's Righteousness*, justified against, and delivered from the *Law*, and brought under the spiritual Ministration of the *New Covenant*, or *Law of Grace*. Such is the Grace God hath manifested in this *New Covenant*, and such is the Goodness he hath expressed in the Promises he hath annexed to the *Law*, that upon our yielding sincere Obedience to it, we are entitled, and have a just *Claim* to eternal Life and *Blessedness*. In this Life we are justified by *Faith alone*, and that is (as I conceive) from the *Law of Works*, and are brought under the *New Covenant*: For *Christ is the End of the Law for Righteousness*, to every one who believeth, Rom. 10. 4. And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the *Law of Moses*, Acts 13. 39. Hereafter we shall be justified according to the renour of the *New Covenant*.

Now if we would know what provision we must make, or what things we must peculiarly attend unto, and exercise our selves

ourselves in, whilst we live in this World,
 to secure to our Souls a just Claim to
 Happiness, when they shall depart hence,
 we must consult the Gospel of our dear
 Saviour, and observe to what things the
Promise of eternal Life is annexed, by
 way of *gracious and bountiful Reward and*
Recompence. I shall briefly take notice
 of three things the holy Scriptures are
 very express in, which (as we desire the
 eternal Happiness of our Souls when they
 depart from our Bodies) we ought se-
 riously to apply our selves unto, and in
 which we must diligently exercise our
 selves, to the best of our Ability, as long
 as we live.

First, *A diligent observing and keeping*
those Commandments the Lord Jesus Christ
hath prescribed; and a conscientious Re-
gard to what he hath made our Duty,
through the whole Conduct of our Lives. O
 that my ways were directed to keep thy Sta-
 tutes! Then shall I not be ashamed, when
 I have respect to all thy Commandments,
 Psal. 119. 5, 6. If we constantly adhere
 to the Acknowledgment of the Lord Je-
 sus Christ, and steadily perform the Du-
 ties he hath enjoined us, notwithstand-
 ing all the Difficulties we may meet with,
 and

and the Sufferings we may (in so doing) be exposed to, we may confidently expect the accomplishment of his Promises: *But he that shall endure to the end, shall be saved, Matth. 24. 13. For to them, who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for Glory, Honour, and Immortality, he will render eternal Life, Rom. 2. 6. Blessed are they that do his Commandments, that they may have right to the Tree of Life, and may enter in through the Gates into the City, Rev. 22. 14.*

Secondly, *A faithful performing those Duties which pertain to the Stations in which the most wise Providence of God doth place us.* God hath a great respect to all the Duties of Piety and Religion; and so must we too; but there are some particular instances on which he lays a peculiar stress; and to acquit our selves well in these, we must have a singular concern, though the other must not by any means be neglected, or left undone. And such are the Duties of our particular Places, Capacities, and Relations. When we perform these, out of Conscience to our Blessed Saviour, with that Diligence and Fidelity he appoints, we adorn and beautifie his most holy Doctrine; we do what

what is exceeding grateful and acceptable to him; we provide well for our Souls in the future state, be our Calling and Station, as low, mean, and servile as is incident to *Humane Nature*: Servants be obedient to them that are your Masters according to the *Flesh*, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your Heart, as unto Christ; not with Eye-service as Men-pleasers, but as the Servants of Christ, doing the Will of God from the Heart; with good-will doing Service, as to the Lord, and not to Men, knowing that whatsoever good thing any Man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free, Ephes. 6. 5, 6, 7, 8. Blessed is that Servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing; i. e. performing the Businesses and Offices of the Place and Station he is deputed to, and set in, Matth. 24. 46.

Thirdly, *A laying out, and employing those Talents with which God doth intrust us, to those good Ends and Purposes for which he assigns and commits them unto us.* Every one hath received from the Lord some Talent or other, with which he may be serviceable, and do some good to others: And by how much the more
servi-

serviceable we are in our *Generations*, by how much the more good we do to others, by so much the better *use* we make of the *Gifts* and *Blessings* our Lord doth commit to our *trust*, by so much the more we glorify our Lord at present, and by so much the more abundantly we lay up in store for our own future *Comfort* and *Happiness*. He that hides his *Talent* in the *Earth*, he that is of a *niggardly* contracted *Spirit*, who cares for no body but himself, lays up for none but his own, will not distribute and scatter abroad his *Light*, his *Advice*, his *Counsel*, his *Goods*, his *Money*, for the *Benefit* of those who need his assistance, who want relief, is a *Burthen* to the Place where he lives, and a *Curse* to himself; he treasures up *Plagues* and *Vengeance* for himself. But he who by his hearty zealous *Prayers*, by his *Instructions*, *Counsels*, *Exhortations*, &c. continually endeavours to draw down *Blessings* from *Heaven* upon others, and to convert *Sinners* to the *Wisdom* of the *Just*, and by a discreet *Bounty*, succours the *Indigent*, and does what he can to ease and make as comfortable as may be the *Condition* of those afflicted, needy, distressed Persons

he has reason to believe are *Members* of the *Blessed Jesus*, takes a most effectual course not only to be *happy hereafter*, but to be advanced to the *highest Dignity*, and most *glorious Apartments* in the *Kingdom of Heaven*: *They that turn many to Righteousness, shall shine as the Stars, for ever and ever, Dan. 12. 3.* Feeding and clothing, refreshing and shewing kindness, and doing good to the Poor, Needy, Oppressed, Helpless, &c. with the Goods and Wealth we have in the World, and having a special regard to those of the *Houshold of Faith* who are in want, and doing thus in Obedience to God, with a becoming disposition of Heart, in proportion to our Abilities and their Occasions, will contribute very much to our being recompenced with an *exceeding weight of Glory* hereafter. There is no one thing so frequently and earnestly recommended to us in the *New Testament*, and urged on us so particularly with assurance of intitling us to *Happiness*, and that in its *utmost degrees* after we are dead, and our Souls are gone out of this World, as this of *Charity*, and doing good to others with whatsoever we have, that can be used to their benefit and

and advantage. I say unto you (they are our Saviour's Words) make to your selves Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting Habitations, Luke 16. 9. Charge them that are rich, — that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; for this is the way for them to lay up for themselves a good Foundation, or Treasure, against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal Life, 1 Tim. 6. 18, 19. Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all Men, especially unto them who are of the Household of Faith, Gal. 6. 9, 10. See Matth. 25. 31. to the end.

What can or ought to have a greater influence on us, to engage and quicken us to exercise our selves with all our might in these courses, than the consideration of *Death*, if we heartily believe that when our Souls depart hence, they must be assigned to an eternal estate of misery or happiness, according as we have employed our selves in this present Life? We cannot desire *Misery* hereafter under that precise Notion, no more than we can desire

are desire it at present. And eternal Misery and Happiness, are as *momentous* and pressing Considerations to guide and influence our Actions and Conduct, as the distance is great betwixt a *short duration*, and that which will never have an end.

Let us approve our selves sincere, diligent and constant, in pursuing the Methods before mentioned, that we may provide well for the eternal Happiness of our Souls, when they must be separated from these Bodies; for if we do so, we may be confident that when our earthly Houses of this Tabernacle shall be dissolved, we shall have a Building of God, an House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens, 2 Cor. 5. 1. Therefore, my beloved Brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know your Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord, 1 Cor. 15. 58.

We may rest well assured, if we cordially persist in these courses, that we shall be everlastingly blessed in the next World: Not because of the *intrinsic* Worth of our Performances, but by virtue of the gracious Promise by which our Lord hath freely bound himself to recompence with that Reward every one who

doth so. Let me constantly do the Work my Lord hath appointed me, with all my *Heart*, and with all my *Strength*! Let me ever renounce all thoughts of *Merit* in any thing I shall be enabled to do! But let me never *distrust*, but constantly with joy depend on the *Truth* and *Faithfulness* of my Ever-blessed *Saviour*! During Time, and throughout Eternity, let me with unconceivable *Ardour* celebrate the *Riches of Divine Love*! Let me with the *unexpressible*, and yet *unknown* Strength and Flights of pure unmixed *Admiration* and *Love*, everlastingly cry out, *Grace Grace!*

Thirdly, *To instruct us what is our only and true Happiness.* A desire of Happiness is so essential to our *Nature*, no Man can lay it *aside*: It is this that puts our Souls in *motion*, and gives *life* to all our *Powers*. Whatsoever we do, it is in prospect of some *Good*, of something that tends one way or other to our *Happiness*. Every Man desires and chuses, and pursues that which he conceives will contribute best to his being happy.

The great difficulty we find in persuading People, ariseth either from our not knowing how to *adjust* our *Reasons* and

Moti-

Vor *Motions* to what particular Persons esteem
 th a their *supreme Good*, or our not understand-
 Le ding how to *present* them so, as to make
 deri them sensible of the *connexion* what we
 Bu propound, hath with that which they rec-
 wit kon their *principal Interest*. It is easie
 ulne persuading any Man to comply with any
 rin thing we can convince him, has a neces-
 t m sary connexion with *that*, without which
 e th he really believes he *cannot be happy*. But
 h th the strongest Reason in the World pre-
 ngt vails not with him, who perceives not
 latio that it doth reach unto, and affect what
 ace his Heart is wholly set upon. One Ar-
 gument prevails mightily with *one Man*,
 onl but makes no impression on *another*; and
 ppe whence is this? For the *Argument* is the
 Ma same in it self to every one. The reason
 s ou is plainly this: It *nearly affects* what the
 ou former Person places his Happiness in,
 pro but has not the same *Relation* to what the
 tha other chiefly desires, or else the latter
 ews perceives not its *connexion* with it, so
 our clearly as the other does.

con The most potent and peculiar Reasons
 and Motives in *Religion*, are of no force
 wa and weight with him that looks for his
 not *Portion* in this World, and places his
 and Happiness in earthly Honours, sensual

oti-

Pleasures, &c. for these concern not the matters he is resolved to mind, and is most intent on. Before you can expect these Considerations should be regarded by, and should sway with him, you must convince him of his *Mistake*, in setting such a value on these things, and make him sensible that his only Happiness doth consist in what *Religion* teaches to be true *Happiness*; and when he is really of that *Judgment*, and heartily chuses that for his Happiness, then you may expect that those Considerations will have a suitable influence on him.

A misguided desire of Happiness, was that which made us all miserable: When our First Parents would be *as Gods*, happier than their *Nature* was capable of being, and would provide themselves (by the Devil's assistance) another Happiness than what God appointed them; they ruined themselves and their Posterity.

The general *Fault* that prevails in the World, is this: We judge amiss, and terminate our Desires where we should not; we take not that for our *chief Good and Happiness*, which God hath appointed to be our Happiness; but we place

our Happiness in other things, and then we pursue them with all our *might*, and hearken not to any thing but what *favour*s our prosecuting of those things we have *resolved* to have *Happiness* from. This is our *fault*, and this is our *miser*y; we *judge*, and we *live* by *Sense*.

The early acquaintance we have with the Objects of *Sense*, and the pleasure they afford us, occasion our chusing them for our Happiness; and when we arrive to the use of our *Reason*, we employ it not to examine and assist us in *judging* wherein our truest Happiness doth consist, but in *drudging* and *contriving* for the obtaining of what we *chose*, whilst under the *predominant Power* and *tyranny* of *Sense*. And thus we confirm our selves in our *Errour* and *Slavery*, till by a *supernatural Light* and *Power* we are *awakened*, and brought to a deliberate weighing and *examining* of things, all the Counsels, Thoughts, and Proceedings of the *greatest worldly Politicians* of every *ungodly wicked Man*, are meer *Foolishness*; they all amount to no more than one *continued bulky Errour*.

If we must die, and our Souls must live for ever in another World, a *moderate*

rate Thoughtfulness (one would think) might serve to convince us that the things of this World cannot be our *chief and supreme Good*: For if these things could yield us a *pure, undisturbed Delight* as long as we live here (which every one perceives they cannot) yet they could not be our *sovereign Happiness*, because our Souls cannot carry Houses, Lands, Money, and sensual Pleasures with them into the *next World*. He that hath the greatest share of these things, must unavoidably leave them all behind him when he dies; and yet we shall have need of Happiness in the *future World*, as well as we have in this present World.

Our true Happiness and supreme Good, must then consist in the enjoyment of *those things* which God hath prepared in Heaven for his faithful Servants, and which he recommends unto our *choice*. These are the things we should fix on, as our only Happiness and principal Good. And if we do thus upon the assurance God hath given us of them, it will effectually restrain us from all those *evil Courses*, to which God hath threatned *everlasting Perdition*, and carry us with perseverance and *peremptory Resolution*, through

ink) through all the Methods and Duties he
things hath ordered us to observe, for the secu-
and ring of them to our selves.

For let Men talk what they please,
or as that which they do really prefer, and
one for the sake of which they do hazard all
ould other things, is most certainly what
ause their Hearts are set upon, and what they
nds, have chosen for their Happiness and
hem Treasure. Did we really and heartily
the chuse God and Christ, and the unseen
na- Glory for our Happiness, it would effe-
men ctually restrain all our Lusts, and mortifie
of them, unless we are fallen under that
as worst of Delusions, of thinking that the
Heavenly Glory may be reconciled to a
wilfully wicked Life. Lay not up for your
selves Treasures upon Earth, where Moth
and Rust do corrupt, and where Thieves
break through and steal; but lay up for your
selves Treasures in Heaven, where neither
Moth nor Rust do corrupt, nor Thieves
break through and steal; for where your
Treasure is, there will your Heart be also,
Matth. 6. 19, 20, 21. Most good and
blessed Lord! be thou pleased to help
me to consider my latter End so, that I
may be fully convinced my Happiness
doth consist in living for ever in thy

blessed Presence! where there are Rivers
 of Joy, and Pleasures for evermore!
 and powerfully influenced to apply my
 Heart at present unto true Wisdom!
 Grant that the consideration of Death
 may, by the efficacy of thy holy Spi-
 rit, determine me so to chuse for my
 principal Happiness, the enjoyment of
 thy Self in Heaven, and the possession
 of those Mansions my dear Saviour the
 Lord Jesus Christ is gone before to pre-
 pare for all those who shall sincerely love
 and obey him, as may effectually influ-
 ence me to a constant and chearful doing
 all the Work thou hast assigned me to do,
 managre all the Lustings of the Flesh, the
 flatteries and frowns of this evil World,
 and the treacherous delusive Suggestions
 of my grand Adversary the Devil! 'till
 it shall be thy pleasure to remove me
 from the Toils and Labours of this pre-
 sent Life, and to admit me to that blef-
 sed Vision of thy Self! which will trans-
 form me into thy glorious Likeness!
 Lord! *I will behold thy face in Righte-
 ousness! for I shall be satisfied when I
 awake with thy Likeness.* Psal. 17. 15.

Fourthly, *To assure our selves that we
 shall be accountable hereafter, for what*

we

we do whilst we are here in the Body. When we die, our Souls will be treated and dealt with, and disposed of to a state of Happiness or Misery, answerable to what our course of Life hath been, or to the good or evil estate we shall be found in, when our Souls depart this World. Thus it will be with every particular Person; his Soul upon its leaving the Body, shall, by divine Appointment, be lodg'd in a blessed or cursed state, according as the truth of the Person's estate in this Life was either gracious or sinful. The future Condition will be joyous, or dolorous, according as the Person was pious or wicked here.

And the righteousness of God's proceeding with every particular Soul at its departure hence, will be fully justified, and made undeniably manifest to all the World, at the *great and solemn Day of Judgment*. When all those Souls he hath assigned to a blessed estate, being united every one to his proper Body, and evidently appearing to have been admitted into, and to have approved themselves faithful under the *Covenant and Law of Grace*, the Lord Jesus Christ shall solemnly pronounce on them all together;

the Sentence of Blessing, rehearsing also the Evidences and Proofs of their Title to, and Interest in the same: *Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the World; for I was an hungred, and ye gave me Meat, &c. Mat. 25. 34, &c.* Thus will the Happiness they were before assigned to, be publicly justified, and they confirmed in it, and all the other *Advantages* pertaining to that *time*, will then be actually conferred on them, which they will eternally enjoy.

All these Souls which go out of this World loaded with Sin and Guilt, will be appointed to a state of Horrour and Torment; and the righteousness of this Appointment, will be made undeniably evident at the *great Day*, when being united to their own Bodies, they shall appear before the Great and Glorious Judge, and shall give an account of what they (every one of them in particular) did in this World. When their Works and Deeds shall be produced, which were materially against that Law they were to govern themselves by, and which

the

the Law threatned with eternal Vengeance. And when they shall be obliged to give a true and impartial account of the *Principles*, the *Motives* and *Reasons* which induced them to do those Acts which for the matter of them the Law commanded, whereby it will appear most plainly to themselves, and all the Spectators then present, how dissonant and contrary even these their Performances were, to what the Law obliged them unto: Then will their former Misery be openly justified; they will all, by the solemn and dreadful Sentence of the Great and most Righteous Judge, be confirmed in their Misery and Unhappiness, and be further loaded with all the Aggravations of Horreur and Torment, reserved to be inflicted at that time, which they must for ever endure.

Every one will be proceeded with, both at Death and Judgment, according to that Law under which he continued: Those who are truly pious and good, by the *Law of Grace*, or New Covenant, according to the particular Oeconomy or dispensation of it ministred unto them; those who are wicked and ungodly by the *Law of Works*, the Favour of the Gospel.

Gospel, or of the Law of Grace, will not be allowed unto them. Those who are wicked and ungodly, and do impenitently continue so, will be judged (I conceive) by the Law of Works, whatsoever profession they may make in Words: For the New Covenant discharges none (as I apprehend) from the Obligation of the Law of Works, but only those who sincerely close with it. Yet those who obstinately refuse the Mercy of the Gospel, or New Covenant, when tendered unto them, and those who pretend to accept of the New Covenant, but do not heartily and sincerely close with it, and honestly and actually comply with its Terms, though they will be judged according to the Law of Works, will incur a severer Sentence, and greater Condemnation, than what will be inflicted on others who have not been favoured with their Advantages. This (I think) is very evident from many places in the Gospels; and (I suppose) this is the reason why the punishment of *Unbelievers* and *Hypocrites*, is represented as the most *extream*, Luke 12. 46. Matth. 24. 51. This is certain, (the Apostle being very express in it)

That

That as many as have sinned without Law, shall also perish without Law; and as many as have sinned in the Law, shall be judged by the Law, in the Day when God shall judge the Secrets of Men by Jesus Christ, according to my Gospel, Rom. 2. 12, 16.

Whilst we are here in the Body, we are in a state of Trial: What we do in this World, refers to the next. If we misbehave our selves, loiter away, and misemploy all our Time; if we indulge our Lusts, and work Iniquity, what a *ruful state* shall we be in, as soon as our Souls arrive at the other World! For we must all appear before the *Judgment-Seat of Christ*, that every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad, 2 Cor. 5. 10. The last Sentence will ratifie that Appointment, by which every particular Soul is at Death determined to either an estate of *Rest and Comfort*, or of *Trouble and Anguish*.

What efficacy would a constant sense of Death, in its true notion, have upon our Practice? sure it would check and restrain our common Rashness and Precipitancy, would make us duly consider things, and govern our Actions wisely,
see-

seeing all the Passages of our Lives, and all our Behaviours, will in a little time be reviewed, and brought again to our Minds; seeing they will have such a mighty influence on our future estate, that if we cannot justify them, or do not repent of, and amend them in time, they will contribute unconceivably to our endless horror and confusion.

Let us consider, our Business here is not to consult our *Ease*, hunt after *car-nal Diversions*, or load our selves with *thick Clay*. We are now upon *Trial*; this is the time we have to work and labour in, for everlasting Blessedness: But if we neglect our present Business, and employ our selves wholly about other matters (matters of which we shall be ashamed, or which will yield us no comfort at, or after Death) then we are likely to miscarry for ever.

In what a case will those People's Souls be, when they have left this World, who can render no good account of what they did when in the World! which are no sooner loosed from their *pampered Bodies*, and forced to leave the *Pleasures* and *Riches* which are doated on here, but they shall behold the *Frowns* of

and of an *Angry, Incensed, Provoked God!*
 time shall no sooner pass from *Toils and La-*
 our *ours* on Earth, but shall be ordered to
 ch a the *Horrours and Torments of Damna-*
 ate, tion.

How observant should we be of the
 Workings of our Hearts! What care
 should we take of our Words and Acti-
 ons, since all these referr to a future
 estate! since they will have a mighty in-
 fluence on our *Weal or Woe*, when we
 enter into the *invisible World!*

May it be my continual care for the
 time to come, to get my self purified
 and made clean! to preserve such a Tem-
 per of Spirit, and observe such a Con-
 duct in my Life, that none of those fleshly
 Lusts, none of those worldly corrupt
 Affections, none of those vicious inor-
 dinate Passions, none of those Loads of
 Guilt, may cleave unto my Soul, when
 I must leave this Body to be thrown in-
 to the *Grave!* which will cause my Soul
 to sink into *everlasting Burnings!* Let me
 seek and pray, and strive for every
 Grace; and exercise my self so diligently
 and perseveringly in *doing Good*, that
 when my Soul shall take its *flight* from
 this *impure, defiled, wearisome Region*, I
 may

may give up my Account with joy, my Soul may enter into *the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*, and eternally *expatiate* in the *ravishing Praises* of my most *gracious God*, and most *beneficent Redeemer*!

Here, People of all sorts are very busy, and please themselves with an *Opinion* that they do no *hurt*; they think they are only providing for their *present ease*, and laying up *Treasures on Earth* for *themselves* and their *Posterity*: And what harm in all this? This is no more than *honest Care* and *commendable Providence*. Well; but if this be all you are concerned for, or what you are most of all concerned for, what account will you give hereafter of your *Time* and *Work*? If this be all you care and labour for, what will become of your *Souls*, when your *commendable Providence* (as you call it) shall be at an end? O that every one would seriously consider he is now preparing for *Eternity*, and must be happy or miserable after death for ever, according as he *demeans* and *behaves* himself in this *Life*!

MEDITATION II.

*Concerning the Necessity of our Dying ;
and what this Necessity is to be re-
solved into: With some Use we
should make of This.*

DEATH is what we should all expect and look for ; it will be the Lot and Portion of every one of us ; it is that none of us can avoid ; we must submit to it whether we will or no. We may do much to prevent an *uncomfortable Death*, but no *Device* can be found out to secure us from *Dying* ; sooner or later we shall every one of us die. Certainly if any thing shall preserve us (who live not in the Age when the Lord Jesus Christ will come to Judge the World) from Death, it must be our arriving to equal *Enoch* and *Elias* in their *Faith* and *Walking with God*. But though their *Translation* was a Favour, with which God was pleased to recompence their *Faith* and *Piety*, I am not sure we have ground to expect the like *Exemption* from *Death*, if we should attain to the same

same degrees of *Grace* and *Holiness*, which rendred them so *Illustrious*. Their *Translation* was not the necessary Effect of their *Great* and *Heroick Goodness* they were endued with, and which they did so notably exert in their several *Generations*. Nor do I any where find that God hath obliged himself to treat any other person in the same manner, if he should exactly tread in their *steps*, and attain in all instances of *Duty* to be their *Parallel*. Their escaping of *Death* was an *extraordinary Priviledge*, which God was graciously pleased to *vouchsafe* unto them. Those who attain to the greatest measures of *Goodness*, and act all *Graces* so, as to exhibit and set off every one with *peculiar Lustre*, will be sure not to lose their *Labour*; they will be abundantly recompenced: But I do not know any ground we have to be positive, that those who *equal* one another in *Grace* and *Godliness*, shall certainly partake of all the same *external Favours*.

There is a necessity that we must *die*: Let us do our utmost to serve our Lord in the best manner that is possible, and then confidently expect a full Reward of our Labours from the Faithful and True God

God in the next World; but let us not so much as *dream* of getting to *Heaven* any other way, than by leaving our *Bodies* behind us for a time.

Indeed, some appear positive, that Man was created *mortal*, because his Body was made of the Earth, and did consist of a certain Contemperation of contrary Qualities, which by the necessity of Nature, would in time have resolved into its First Principles, and have been unavoidably dissolved without the intervention of extraordinary and supernatural Grace.

These Persons seem to *presume too far*, and to intrude upon God's *Prerogative*; to limit his *Wisdom* and *Power*; to set bounds to, and confine the *Divine Perfections* in their Operations, tying God up to the *Capacity*, or rather *natural Tendency* of the meanest and most inconsiderable *Parts*, of what he makes use of in the Works he is pleased to effect. Could not Infinite Wisdom *know* and *contrive*, or was not Infinite Power *able* to frame a Creature, in the composition of which there was to be something which barely considered in it self, was corruptible, but that Creature must for

for that very Reason be corruptible too?

This *Opinion*, or *Notion*, was at first devised to supplant and overthrow the Doctrine of *Original Sin*; for that reason it was anciently detested by very good and Orthodox Christians; they thought it of very bad and dangerous consequence. Let all sincere and hearty Christians be still of the *same Mind*, and think no better of it now,

God did at first create *Man* a very exact and admirable Creature; he framed his Body out of the Earth, and then breathed into him a *Living and Rational Soul*; he endued him with Knowledge, Righteousness, and Holiness, made him in his own Image, and after his Likeness. Man thus made, was such a Creature, that it was not impossible for him to die, yet there was no necessity that he should die: He had a Body made of Dust, composed of contrary Qualities. But he was not mortal, as that notes a necessity that he must die: For though his Body was made of such Matter as might be resolved into its Principles, yet there was no necessary connexion between his Constitution and Death: He might, notwithstanding

standing *that*, have been *immortal*, and have never died.

The Holiness of his Soul might have preserved his Body from all *internal* Causes and Occasions of *Death* and Corruption: No outward Occasions or Causes of Death could occur, whilst he continued under the *Protection* of that *Providence* God exercised over him in his *first estate*.

God having thus created our *First Parents*, and placed them in *Paradise*, he forbade them to eat of the *Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil*, having allowed them the free use of all the other Trees in the *Garden*. This *Prohibition* he guarded with this *Threat*, That if they did disobey, and eat what he had forbidden them, they should *surely die*. Death was the *Punishment* they should *incurr*, if they did transgress, and make themselves *guilty* by breaking that Law, *Gen. 2. 16, 17*. So that they were not mortal, or *obnoxious unto Death*, 'till they did *sin*. After they had committed that *Sin*, the Sentence of *Death* was *ratified* and confirmed, *Gen. 3. 19*.

Sin introduced Death upon Man, as the consequence of God's determining
that

that Man should be mortal and die, if he did transgress that Law, and eat of the Tree of which God had forbidden him to eat: *Wherefore as by one Man Sin entered into the World, and Death by Sin; and so Death passed upon all Men, for that all have sinned, Rom. 5. 12.* Death is not to be looked on as the necessary Consequence of our Nature, but the proper Reward and Wages of Sin: *For the Wages of Sin is Death, Rom. 6. 23.*

Man had not died, if he had not sinned; and therefore Death could not be the meer consequence of his Nature. Nor are we here to understand only eternal Death, but bodily Death too; for that must necessarily be understood by his returning unto Dust, which is declared to be his Punishment for Sin committed, *Gen. 3. 19. Eccles. 12. 7.*

The necessity of our Dying, is to be resolved into God's appointment; and thus the Apostle did resolve it, *It is appointed unto Men once to die, Heb. 9. 27.* God did determine, or appoint, that if our First Parents should eat of the Fruit he had forbidden them, then every Man (excepting only such as he should be pleased by his Sovereign Prerogative to ex-

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cuse) should die; i. e. after he had spent such a portion of Time in this World, as God should be pleased to allot him for his *Trial* and Probation, his Soul should be separated from his Body, to be determined to an eternal estate in the other World.

It is the Determination and Appointment of *Almighty God*, that Death shall be our lot, as that to which our First Parents *Transgression* hath subjected us; and our Times are entirely in his hands; we are wholly at his disposal; and he hath fixed a Period, beyond which Man is not to live; he hath assigned a Time, beyond which Man shall not have his abode, or live any longer in this World. *Is there not an appointed time to Man upon Earth? Are not his days also like the days of an Hireling?* Job 7. 1. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee; thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass, Chap. 14. 5.

We must needs die. This is as certain as it is that we are now alive: Death is what we must every one look for, and submit unto; it is that which belongs to us all; not as we are Men, but as we are *Sinners*. We are Sinners our selves, and
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we all lie under the fatal Influence of our First Parents Sin in eating the forbidden Fruit : And therefore we must die.

Let us make use of this great Truth,

First, To preserve and maintain awakening, rousing Apprehensions and Thoughts in our Minds, that we are mortal, and must unavoidably die. When we reflect on all the Ages and Generations that are past ; when we observe that Death hath all along been the way of all Flesh ; when we perceive that Death is the Portion of all sorts of People round about us, we have reason to conclude it will be so to us.

But these kind of Instructions, though so very sensible, and so frequently occurring, are not ordinarily improved as they should be. In defiance of these constantly reiterated Warnings, we behave ourselves as if we thought we might as certainly escape Death in all its Forms and Modes of approach, as some do escape when the Sword hews down the greatest numbers, or when an Epidemick Distemper makes the most astonishing Devastation and Havock.

But

But if we settle this Truth deeply in our Hearts, That *Death* happens not to People by *chance*, but that it is *God's Appointment*, that we must and shall die; this will not only silence all Pretences why we should expect to escape, when we see or hear that People of all *Ranks* and *Ages*, do yield to *Death*, not only preserve us from a general *Unconcernedness* about our own *Death*, but it will effectually prompt and irritate us in our greatest *Strength*, *Ease*, and *Prosperity* to entertain our selves often, and to good purpose, with holy *Job's Determination*. *I know that thou wilt bring me to Death, and to the House appointed for all the Living*, Job 30. 23.

It is as impossible for us to secure our selves from *Death*, as to stop the *Sun* in its *Course*; he that by *Prayer* prevail'd to do that, stoop'd to, and fell under the stroke of *Death*. It is as much within our power to pull the *Sun* out of the place *God* hath assigned it, as to make our selves immortal, and preserve our selves from *Death*. Can we reverse the *Sentence* of the *Almighty*? Can we alter the *Decrees* of *Heaven*? The *Purposes* of *God* are un-
D changeable;

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changeable; His Appointment and Counsel shall stand.

He doth allow us *means*, and require us to make use of them, in dependance on his *Blessing*, for the preserving and continuing of our *Lives* and *Health*, so long as he shall be pleased to *protract* and *lengthen them out*. But he hath not appointed any means, nor will any methods prove effectual to continue us all ways in *Life*, and preserve us that we shall never die.

A firm *Perswasion* that God hath appointed we shall die, if we had frequent recourse to it, and were careful to improve it duly, would cure a vast number of *Disorders*, and would have a very happy *Influence* on our practice, whilst *Life* continued. All Persons are ready enough to declare, they confess and acknowledge they must die, just as they do *confess* and acknowledge a great many other *Propositions*, which are most certainly true in themselves; but they never thoroughly considered them, do not understand them, nor really believe them. They have accustomed themselves to use such *Words*, and speak such *Sentences*; and this they call *believing*; whereas did they really

really *understand* what they say, and *heartily believe* what they should understand when they *express* themselves in such *Forms of Speech*, the *Truths* their Words relate to, would most assuredly have a much *more powerful* and *good effect* on them, would produce *Fruit* in their *Conversations* much more *proportionable* to their *Nature* and *Tendency*, and the just grounds of such a Faith than are commonly to be observed.

O Lord! in thee I live, move, and have my Being! I have all my dependance on thee! Thou *holdest my Soul* in *Life*, and all my times are in thy hands! It is thy just and righteous *Appointments* that I must die! What Man is there that liveth, and shall not see Death? Or that shall deliver himself from the power of the Grave? I know, Lord, that thou wilt bring me to the dust of Death, and to the House thou hast appointed for all the Living! Therefore all the days of my appointed time will I wait 'till my change come!

Secondly, To acquaint us what account we should make of Death, and of what consideration it should be with us. We must not reckon Death a meer natural, not a

fortuitous *Accidental* thing. We owe Nature a *Death*, say some People; and such an one *chanced* to die, say others: But these are not *Speeches* which become those who do *duly consider* Death, and are sensible whose *Messengers* all those things be, which are the *occasions* of People's dying, and on whose *Errand* they do come unto them.

By what way or means soever any do die, we should extend our Thoughts further than the outward *Occasion*, *Cause* or *Instrument* of the Person's death, and consider it as a *Messenger* commissioned by the *Lord of Heaven and Earth* to execute his *Sentence*, and accomplish his most wise and holy *Purpose*.

Whether a Person die by a *plain*, *visible* *natural* Cause, or in such a way that *Man* can give an account *how he died*, we ought to ascend so *high*, as to observe and take notice of the *Providence*, *Harmony* and *Appointment* of God. We must look farther than the natural Power and Efficacy of any Instrument, and consider God's *Appointment* that those *Bands* should be untied and *loosed*, by which the Soul and Body were *fastned together*, that the Soul should *dislodge* and be se

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free from its earthly Tabernacle and House of Clay.

Such a Consideration of *Death*, especially if repeated seriously, as oft as solemn Occasions are offered for them, would be of great use to beget in us *vivid Apprehensions* of that entire Dependance we have on God; it would fasten pious and devout *Impressions* so deeply on our Spirits, they would diffuse and shed abroad a very *wholesom, benign, and profitable Influence* on our Practices. It would settle a great *Reverence* of God in our Hearts; and make us wisely consider of, and prepare for our own *Summons*. It is better to go to the House of Mourning, than to the House of Feasting; for that is the end of all Men, and the living will lay it to his Heart, Eccles. 7. 2. It will contribute much to quiet and pacifie our Spirits, and to frame us to a free, decorous, and obediential Submission, when our nearest Relations, and dearest Friends, are removed from us by Death. It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good, said pious Eli, when informed of the very dreadful and astonishing Judgments God would certainly inflict on his House and Children, 1 Sam. 3. 18. I was dumb, I opened

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not my mouth, because thou didst it, Psal. 39. 9. *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the Name of the Lord, Job 1. 21.*

If I had duly eyed God, in those *Passages* of my Life, which I have thought very sharp and keen, in the Death of my *Children, Relations, and peculiar Friends and Benefactors*, which have too much ruffled and disordered me; I am certain I should have born the same with more ease, and with greater *composedness* of Spirit; and I should have improved them much more to my best *Advantage* than I have done. Most merciful Father! for thy only and dearly beloved Son's sake, pardon all my *Forgetfulness* of thee, in all those *Occurrences* which thou hast with *infinite Wisdom and Goodness* caused me to be interested in! Forgive my *unsubmissive, undutiful Carriages*, and all the *Tumultuousness and Inordinacy* of my *Passions*! Help me so to consider, that Death is thy *Appointment*, that I may glorifie thee in other *People's Death*, if it shall be thy Pleasure to stretch forth my Life to a greater length than theirs; and that I may live in such a constant expectation of my own *Dissolution*, that whenever it shall

shall please thee to put a Period to this *sinful Life*, I may entertain thy *Messenger* with *Thankfulness* and *Joy*! Let me in every Case, under every Dispensation, heartily say, *Good is the Word* and *Appointment of the Lord*!

Thirdly, *To satisfy our selves that it is very just, reasonable, equal, and fit that Men should die.* It is God's Appointment; and shall not the Judge of the *World do Right*!

God hath not revealed to us the *Reasons* why he would assign Death for all Men, if our First Parents should act contrary to his Prohibition. And therefore we must resolve *this* into his own *Good Will* and *Pleasure*: Yet we may be satisfied he did so for *most wise* and *good Reasons*: because all his *Determinations* are most agreeable with, and conformable to the *Decrees* of the most *unblemishable*, the *best*, the most *perfect Wisdom* and *Goodness*.

Those who will not acquiesce in God's good Pleasure and Will: where he hath thought fit to conceal his Reasons from us, may reasonably be suspected not likely to be much *bettered* by our *feeble Conjectures* and *Guesses*.

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We may propound some *tolerable*, at least some *plausible Accounts* of this matter, considering the *present state* of the *World*. But we may not be able to prove, that those were the *precise Reasons* for which God did thus.

Much weightier Reasons may be produced by *Infinite Wisdom*, than we can possibly *comprehend* or *guess* at. When we come to see things in the *future Light*, we may peradventure perceive Reasons for this, as well as for many other things, which cannot *enter* into our Minds whilst we continue in this *dark estate*.

Those who will not *silence* their *Curiosity*, and be contented in this *World*, with the good *Pleasure* of God, may have reason enough to be afraid they shall not meet with any *comfortable satisfaction* in the next: *Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our Children, Deut. 29. 29.*

May I always be a Stranger and averse to *presumptuous Enquiries*! To that *Curiosity* which favours *rankly* of, and carries in it much of that *Malignity* which help'd to *swell* our First Parents *first Transgression*! Instead of prying into Matters which are placed out of *humane reach*,
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may I with profoundest Veneration consult the sacred Oracles: Let me cordially assent, and obediently submit to every thing the most Wise and Holy God hath been pleased to make known to be his Will! Let me firmly believe that every thing he hath said is unalterably true; and be fully perswaded that all his Appointments are most reasonable, just, and good?

Fourthly, To unite and bend all the Powers of our Souls against Sin; and to work in us a true sense of, and due Humiliation for our First Parents grand Offence. Sin is our greatest, our only Enemy; has nothing of good in it; is absolutely loathsome and detestable: Therefore let it be the Object of our whole Displeasure.

Sin is most opposite and contrary unto God, who is essential Goodness; it is Satan's proper Offspring; it is the only thing that has, or can hurt us. We cannot relate all the Mischiefs it doth produce, unless we could enumerate and reckon up all the kinds and degrees of Misery incident to Time, and which shall be endured to Eternity.

We should have always liv'd in ease, in peace, in safety: we should have been constantly healthy, sound, and vigorous;

we should have enjoyed an *undisturbed Tranquility, pure Delights, and satisfying Pleasures*; we should have spent our allotted Time here in the *Ecstasies* of sacred *Love* and *Joy*, and then both Soul and Body would have gone together *triumphing* to the *reserved Glory*. Thus, and how much better would our state have been, had we preserved our *Innocence*, and continued in our *first Integrity*? We should have been as *happy*, as we were *upright*; as distant from *Mortality*, as we were from *Vice*. Had we obeyed our God, we should have always been the *Objects* of his *Love*; the *Joys* of *Paradise* would have been our Portion upon *Earth*, and these at length compleated in the greater *Joys* of *Heaven* to all *eternity*.

But *Sin*, that perfect and accomplish'd *Evil*, changed our *Condition*, and sunk us under all the *direful Contraries*; it brought the *Curse* of God upon our Souls, our Bodies, and all that doth concern, and any way relate unto us; it turn'd us out of *Paradise*, made us a *horror* to our selves, *troublesome* to all about us, exposed us to all the *Calamities* and *Disasters* we complain of here, and to innumerable more: It made us mortal.

mortal, and brought us under a necessity of dying; and 'tis this that makes *Death* terrible and frightful; it renders us unfit for *Heaven*, and justly lays us obnoxious to those *Torments* which were prepared for those cursed *Fiends* we imitated.

Sin brought a *Curse* upon the *Earth*; it makes Men liable to all the *Plagues* and *Judgments* human *Nature* is capable of in this *World*; it often loads them with many of them here, and then by *Death* transports them from a *curse* *Earth*, to a more *curse* *Hell*; and there as well as here, it is it self the *greatest* *Curse* of all, or rather all the rest in one.

Lord! what incomprehensible Hurt hath Sin done us! O may we hate it fully! Let us pour out all our *Indignation* against it! Let us perpetually seek its *Death* and utter *Destruction*! This, this is the truest, the best, the only lawful and profitable *Revenge*: Here let our Anger, Wrath, Detestation, and Abhorrence, exert themselves to their utmost, and take their full swinge! And let this be the only Object against which we will give any of them vent! Yea, let us die in executing *Revenge* on that, which hath made us subject unto *Death*!

Thus

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Thus may we unarm and triumph over Death, and convert *that*, which in it self is so full of *Poison* and *Venom*, into a sovereign Antidote and *Cordial*.

O my Soul! stir up all thy Strength; with all thy might call in Assistance from above, that with reiterated Force and conquering Success, thou may'st continually oppose and maintain thy Fight against that most frightful, fatal Monster, thy most execrable Adversary *Sin*! Hate it in all its *Actings*, in all its *Kinds*, under all its *Disguises*, and in all its *Appearances* with a perfect Hatred! I never seriously reflect upon my former Wickednesses, but the remembrance of them fills me with a Remorse and Bitterness, which infinitely exceeds the Pleasure and Satisfaction they did yield, or I did ever expect from them! O my Soul! with what horror and confusion art thou seized, 'till by Faith thou canst perceive and lay hold on free pardoning Mercy, through the meritorious Blood of the most Unblemish'd and Holy JESUS! Hold on thy Combat therefore; let thy Resistance ever increase; become more strong, more obstinate, and more victorious! Pour out incessantly thy Wrath,
thy

thy Fury, thy Indigation, against every *Sin*, 'till by the power of Grace thy Lusts are throughly mortified; 'till thou art cleansed from every *Stain* thou hast contracted; 'till thou by sinless Spirits art convoyed to that blessed Place, where perfect Freedom, Peace, unspotted Love and Holiness shall always reign!

God forbid that I should any more harbour, cherish any *Sin*, or so much as think that any *Sin* is small or tolerable, since eating the Forbidden Fruit proved so pernicious and so mortal to my First Parents, and to all their Posterity, since it hath dispers'd its Malignity unto all Mankind to this present time, and will do so as long as one Generation shall succeed another.

May I affectionately bewail; and be duly humbled on the account of that Corruption, which cleaves unto, and taints my Nature; from which I cannot be thoroughly cleansed, 'till the Union my Soul at present hath with this gross Body, is perfectly dissolved, and from which all my innumerable actual Transgressions have had their Rise!

Fifthly, *To fix such a mighty Awe of God in our Hearts, as may preserve us*

constantly in a dutiful Behaviour towards him, and extirpate the slavish and sinful Fear of Creatures. The Power of Life and of Death doth primarily and originally belong only to Almighty God: *The Lord killeth, and maketh alive, he bringeth down to the Grave, and bringeth up,* 1 Sam. 2. 6. *And there is not any that can deliver out of his hand,* Dent. 32. 39.

• If God withdraw his supporting Influence, these earthly Tabernacles will presently decay and fall to ruin; these gross fleshly Bodies will immediately drop from our spiritual Part: What a constant sense therefore should we carefully maintain in our selves, of that absolute dependance we have on Him! How diligent ought we to be, that we may be in his Fear, and walk in all-pleasing before him all the day long! What should we be afraid of but only to sin, or to do any thing that may kindle his Displeasure? For who can live, when God is angry?

God can at any time call away our Souls; and when he pleaseth to speak the Word, we must obey; none can resist his Pleasure. Whatever contempt any may now manifest, of those Rules God doth advise us to observe at present
for

for our own good, the *furliest Rebel* cannot make any *resistance*, when he commands his Soul to appear before his *dreadful Tribunal*; he must presently expire; his Soul can make no delay, but will immediately depart.

The means we use for our preservation and support, cannot avail us one jot, if God denies his Blessing with them: And if he commission the most contemptible Instrument to outward appearance to execute his Sentence, the *haughtiest and most potent Man* living, cannot possibly avoid or defend himself against its *fatal Strok*. What a monstrous frightful *Spectacle* did *Herod* suddenly become, though in the height of his Pomp, Gaity, and Bravery, when surrounded with the blasphemous Acclamations of those who too much feared his Displeasure, and impiously courted his Favours? *Acts 12. 23.*

There is nothing so *mean*, but becomes *powerful* enough, when armed with God's Order, to *tear* and *rend* away any Man's Soul from his Body. God, can if he please, lay an unexpected *Check* and *Restraint* upon the most *resolved, impetuous, and powerful Creatures*, that they shall

shall not be able to accomplish their *Purposes*, though they seem to have every thing in a readiness; and there needs but a *Word*, or the letting fall of a *Hand* to effect them. All the Potentates on Earth, with all their Forces, cannot secure themselves, or any single Person, from an Arrow shot at *random*, or from the destroying Stroak of the most despicable thing that is, when it comes with a *Divine Commission* to kill them or him. Kings, and their Armies cannot skreen a Man from Thunder or Lightning, no not from Frogs, nor from Flies, nor from Lice, nor from Worms, nor from any other kind of Vermin, when they come to him with a *Message of Death* from the Supreme *Sovereign*, the Almighty God. Instances of both kinds we have in the holy Scriptures; and human History hath transmitted later Examples of each sort.

Yet, alas! how prone are we to adventure further than we ought, to *ingratiate* our selves with those we call the *High* and the *Powerful*? How apt are we to be dispirited, to be quite cast down, though our Cause be never so good, though it be the Cause of God,
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of Christ, of Religion properly so called, if we are likely to incur the Displeasure of such Persons for it? How few are of such a Spirit as those good Men were of, of whom you may read in *Dan. 3. 16, 17, 18.* Whence do our sinful Compliances, and our slavish Timorousness arise, but from our mistaken Judgments, and our not preserving a due Awe of God, and a becoming Sense of our entire Dependance on him, in our Hearts? Creatures can have no power at all against us, *except it be given them from above.* Let us learn therefore to look above them upon all occasions, and to rely wholly upon him, who is *higher than the highest.* Let us not make *Man* either our Confidence, or our Dread; neither too much depend on, nor excessively fear those who are under a superiour Authority and Power. *Cease ye from Man, whose Breath is in his Nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of? Isai. 2. 22.* There is none like unto thee, O Lord! Thou art great, and thy Name is great in Might: Who would not fear thee, O King of Nations! *Jer. 10. 6, 7.*

Lord! I acknowledge that by every sinful Compliance, I do justly forfeit my Life and my Soul to thy *revenging Justice!*

O let me never adventure to do any thing that will offend and *provoke* thy *sacred Majesty* against me! Let me neither neglect any thing thou makest my Duty, nor do any thing thou do'st forbid me, either to obtain the *Favour* of Men, or to secure my self from their *Rage* and *Fury*! Thou hast innumerable ways to put a sudden period to my Life, if I think to *save it* by renouncing thy *Authority*! Let me continually repose my self under the *Shadow of thy Wings*, and fly for refuge to thy Name, thy Truth, thy Power, thy Faithfulness, thy Wisdom, and thy Goodness! Lord! free me from my *flavish Fears*! Make me *undaunted* in thy Service! Let me with deep Prostrations ever *revere* thy glorious Majesty! Let me resolutely adhere unto my Duty; and let me with a glad and chearful Spirit, entirely resign my self, and all my Interests, to be disposed of as thou shalt judge most meet! O that I could trust in the Lord, and do good, and patiently wait for him!

Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by Prayer and Supplication, with Thanksgiving,

giving, let your Requests be made known unto God. And the Peace of God, which passeth all Understanding, shall keep your Hearts and Minds, through Christ Jesui, Phil. 4. 6, 7.

MEDITATION III.

Concerning the Uncertainty of the Time when we shall Die. Of Preparation for Death. Of Habitual Preparation. Of Actual Preparation. Some Devout Aspirations.

THE most Wise and Good GOD, in whose hands are all our Times, hath not settled one certain measure of Time, to which every Person must live : Nor hath he declared the precise Times, or Time, when every Man, or any Man shall die.

The Time of our Death is a Secret, laid up in the Records above, which are far out of our sight ; we cannot by searching attain to the knowledge of it.

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What *Notices* God may give, what *Impressions* he may in an extraordinary way sometimes *fasten* on the Minds of some particular Persons, touching the *Time* of their own *Death*, is what I can give no account of: But we cannot, in an ordinary way, certainly know that we shall not survive such an Hour, Day, or Week, &c. and that we shall infallibly live to such an Hour, or Day, &c. Let us make what *Conclusions* we will, that we shall die at such an *Age*, and persuade our selves that we shall live 'till we be of that *Age*; and support all this with what *natural Considerations* we please, the whole is at best but *meer Guesß*, and a very uncertain *Conjecture*.

Whether I shall live some Years longer, or whether I shall die this Day, to morrow, or in a very little time, are Questions to which neither I nor any Man else can give any certain Answer. God can, and may if he please, lengthen out my Life some Years more; but I cannot say he will do it. I may die *this Day*; and whether God will cut off the *Thread* of this Life presently, I do not know.

Though God hath revealed what is the *Term* and *Period*, beyond which the
Lives

Lives of the generality of *Mankind* shall not extend, which Observation and Experience hath, and doth continually confirm; yet he hath no-where informed us what particular Persons shall live to that Period, or in what part of that Term we, or any other Persons shall expire. There is not any thing more *certain* than that *we must die*; nor is there any thing more *uncertain* to us, than the *precise Time* when every one, or any one of us must give up the *Ghost*.

God hath been pleased, for most Wise and Good Reasons, to withhold this Knowledge from us: It doth not pertain to us; it would not *orderly contribute* to the Ends and Purposes for which he hath *stated* us in this *World*. He hath provided us more *useful* and *profitable Enquiries* to employ our selves about; as, how we ought to behave our selves, and what use we should make of Life, 'till it shall be his Pleasure to call our *Souls* hence. After all our searches after the time when we shall die, we shall be altogether in the *dark*. Let the *Erectors of Schemes*, *Casters of Nativities*, and *Stargazers*, say what they please, *Death* will surprize those who consult them, if they make

make no better Preparation for it, than those People's Arts do direct unto. *Secret things belong unto the Lord, &c. Deut, 29. 29.*

Constant Experience and Observation afford enough, to convince and satisfy all Mankind, that the *Time* of Man's dying is most *uncertain*. Do we not see that multitudes die in every one of the *Stages* of human Life? Multitudes die in their *Infancy*; great numbers die in their *Childhood*: No fewer (it may be) die in their *youthful Age*; many die when they arrive at *Manhood*, and are come to their *full Strength*; and some few *creep* along, 'till they fall and sink under those *Loads* of *Infirmities* which attend *Old Age*.

How often are those who are of vigorous, strong, and healthy *Constitutions* surprized, and die *no body* knows how? We unexpectedly hear of their *Decease*, who to human appearance any one would have thought very *likely* to live to a very *great Age*; and others who have seemed just ready for their *Coffins*, have worn out a great many Years more. Some die *irrecoverably* in their *Strength*, and are suddenly gone, before they were sensible
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of Pain, of Sickness, or of any of the usual Forerunners, Presages, and Warnings of Death's approach; and others who seem to be quite worn out, who have been long struggling with those Distempers which hardly spare any, who are seized with all the Symptoms of a speedy dissolution, who are given over, and their Lives despaired of by Relations, Friends, and Physicians, do unexpectedly recover, and live out a great many Years. One dieth in his full Strength, being wholly at ease and quiet: His Breasts are full of Milk, and his Bones are moistened with Marrow. And another dieth in the bitterness of his Soul, and never eateth with pleasure, Job 21. 23, 24, 25.

How uncertain are our Lives! How ignorant are we of the time when we shall die! How small a matter may stop our Breath! What unseen, unknown, unthought of Occurrences may end our Days here!

Now if the Time of our Dying be so uncertain, it evidently behoves us to take care that our Preparation for Death be certain: For otherwise we may die before we are ready; and if we do so, we shall miscarry for ever. No wise and prudent Man

Man will put off, and deferr his preparing for what he knows will most certainly befall him, if he believe it to be of great *moment* to him to be in a *readiness*, and he knows not when, or how soon it may happen unto him. We cannot make too *early preparation for Death*, though we may easily deferr our preparation too long. None ever repented of, or bewail'd their being ready *betimes*; but multitudes have in vain lamented their not being ready *soon enough*.

It is our Blessed Saviour's *Advice*, to improve and make the best Advantage of the present Time: He *commands*, he *exhorts*, he *counsels*, he doth *urge* and *press* us to take care that we suffer not any thing to hinder our *present Preparation*, because we *know not the time when our Lord will come*: *Watch therefore*; for ye *know not what hour your Lord doth come*. But *know this*, that if the Good-man of the *House had known in what Watch the Thief would come*, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his *House to be broken up*. Therefore be ye also ready, for *in such an hour, as you think not, the Son of Man cometh*, Matth. 24. 42, 43, 44.

God

God hath set before us *eternal Happiness*, and *eternal Misery*; he commands and perswades us to *chuse the former*; he shews us both how we may avoid and escape the *latter*; and how we may obtain the *other*. It is our Duty and our Interest to chuse what he recommends to us, and to follow his Counsel and Direction; and if we do so, we shall not fail of being in a good Preparation for Death.

By a *Preparation for Death*, I chiefly mean, *our getting into such a state at present, that when we shall live no longer here, our Souls shall be sure to inherit everlasting Blessedness*. This Preparation doth consist in such a *Disposition and Temper of Soul*, as is *suitable to those Objects*, God hath provided for *pious and good People* to converse with *for ever*, as renders it *disposed and fit to receive that Pleasure and Satisfaction* they are intended to afford to *Subjects duly qualified*, and as puts it into a condition to perform with delight, those Acts and Exercises, in which such Persons shall be eternally employ'd. In order to this *Preparation*, three things are necessary:

First, *Our Sins must be pardoned*: By which I mean, we must be delivered and

E

set

set free from the *Obligation* we are naturally under to the *Law of Works*. For as long as *Sin* may be imputed to us by virtue of that *Law*, we are under an *Oeconomy* that doth not admit of *Repentance*; we cannot, in our own Persons, make *Satisfaction* for any Offence committed against that *Law*, but do lie obnoxious and exposed to the *Sentence*, *Curse*, and *Condemnation* it denounceth. This is our state, 'till we are solemnly justified, discharged, and acquitted from it.

Secondly, *The reigning Power of Corruption and Sin must be destroyed in us*. For as long as our Souls and their Faculties are wholly depraved, and their Activity is entire or chiefly *determined* by *vicious, corrupt Bias*, or *Spring*, to *material, sensible Things*, they will be altogether averse to, and unfit to converse with, and exercise themselves with *Delight and Complacency*, about those *Objects* which are pure, spiritual, and divine. All active Powers exert themselves with greatest freedom towards those *Objects*, and in those *Ways* which best correspond and suit with that *Impression*, which hath the greatest force in determining their Motion.

The

The Soul is a very active Being; but it doth not simply and absolutely determine it self, and its Operations, without any regard to those Impressions it doth receive from without; it doth determine its Operations, according to those Impressions which are most potent and strong, which it receives from abroad.

Ever since Man listned unto Satan's Suggestions, and determined (by gratifying his vain Imagination, and sensual Appetite) to provide himself a greater Happiness than God ever intended him, or indeed his Nature was capable of, viz. to be as God, by eating the forbidden Fruit, the Soul hath lost that Divine Impression which was at first stamp'd upon it, which did most rationally sway and incline it to its true Felicity, and is fallen under the Conduct of those Impressions it receives, from material, sensible Things, by virtue of its union with the Body. So that it wholly seeks after, and pursues the Satisfaction of its own natural and general Desire of Happiness, in ways purely agreeable to those Instructions it receives from Sense, and blind Imagination: It is very hardly brought to exercise Reason aright, and judge of Matters

any other way, than in subordination to those corrupt Tendencies it hath thus acquired.

Now as long as the Soul is thus depraved, does so err in its Judgment, and these inordinate Inclinations do prevail in it, it is utterly unfit to converse with pure, spiritual, and divine Objects, and to relish the Pleasure and Satisfaction they are fitted to afford. So that we must get the Mastery over our *corporeal Appetites*, our *sensual Lusts* must be mortified, and our *vicious Passions* must be subdued, before we can be in a Preparation for the *future Blessedness*. For our Souls carry these corrupt Tendencies and Inclinations with them out of this World, nothing can be more contrary to them, than the heavenly state, where there is nothing but what is pure and spiritual, divine and Godlike.

Thirdly, *The predominant Bent of our Souls must be to God, to Christ, and Holiness*. Such a Divine Impression as will effectually cause our Souls to determine themselves to that which is their true Happiness, is necessary to our being prepared to die; that is, to be for ever happy, when our Souls shall have left this

World

World. And in this (I conceive) our *Preparation* (at least in general) doth consist.

When a *Sinner*, truly sensible of his miserable and lost *Estate*, doth understand that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only and effectual, and most gracious *Saviour* of Sinners, doth heartily believe in him, doth sincerely apply himself to him for Salvation, and doth unfeignedly devote himself to his Conduct and Government; then the Lord Jesus Christ doth graciously vouchsafe to intercede with the Father on his behalf, who for the sake of his most perfect *Righteousness* and *meritorious Sacrifice*, doth solemnly acquit and justify him from the *Law of Works*. The Lord Jesus doth admit and own him for his Subject, and confers on him his *Holy Spirit*, to subdue and mortify in him, the reigning *Strength of Corruption and Sin*, and to encline and determine his Soul unto that which is his *Sovereign and Chief Good*.

The Person with whom it is thus, is said to be *regenerated and born again*; to be made a *new Creature*, and partaker of the *Divine Nature*. The Soul, which is endued with this *Divine Impression, Prin-*

78 *MEDITATIONS*

ciple, or *New Nature*, doth exert it self regularly, according to the various *Objects*, and the different *Representations* which are made of them, and the *Occasions* and *Opportunities* which do occur or he doth obtain.

These several *Actings* of the Soul, are set forth and expressed by several *Denominations* and *Terms*, answerable to the *Objects*, &c. on which they *terminate*, and the *manner* in which they are *exerted*. They are commonly taken notice of, as so many *distinct Graces*. These are all expedient and necessary to be exerted, as *Occasions* are ministred, in order to the maintaining and preserving the *Soul* as long as it is in the *Body*, in the *Frame* and *Temper* before mentioned; and under this *Consideration*, they are to be taken notice of, as preparatory to the *future Happiness*.

Some of these *Graces* are of that nature, the Soul will exert the very *same Acts*, though in a higher measure and degree, and in a more sublime and elevated manner, in the *future state*, which it does at present. But I am not positive, that our frequent exerting and improving in these *Acts* and *Graces* at present, may be

it fel be, in strictness of Discourse, properly
s Ob termed our *Preparation*, or improving in
ation our *Preparation* for *eternal Happiness*,
Occa any farther than as they contribute to
curr maintain and preserve in us our *Prepara-
tion* for it.

When the Soul hath left the Body, it
will retain that Impression, or Principle,
which was most *predominant* in it, whilst
united to the Body. The truly regene-
rate and good Man's Soul, when out of
the Body, will retain only that *Divine
Principle*; which had the strongest and
most powerful Influence on it; so that
how imperfect soever it was in its pious
and good Exercises here, it will then be
entirely under its Guidance and Conduct;
which it will follow with utmost freedom,
and without any opposition: For being
delivered from the Body, it will be free
from all that *Molestation* and *Distur-
bance* it had before, from those Impres-
sions it received from material Things,
by reason of its union with the Body; it
will not be liable any more to meet with
any *Hindrance*, from the Insinuations and
Suggestions of the Devil and evil Spirits,
being far enough out of their reach; nor
will it be any longer in a *state of Trial*.

Yet these two Things are very evident: 1. *That the Soul will exert it self, whilst in the Body, in some proportion to that Impression, or Principle, which hath the strongest Influence on it:* And therefore if any Person pretend he is regenerated, and endued with a *Divine Principle*, but never takes care to bring forth its *genuine Fruits*, he hath great reason to suspect himself deceived, and under a deadly Mistake, because he acts and behaves himself in a way directly contrary to the Nature and Tendency of that *Principle* he pretends hath the most powerful Influence over him. 2. *That the more vigorous and diligent we are in acting every Grace, the more ready and expert we shall be in the exercising of them as occasion shall occasion shall occur, whilst we are in the Body; and with the more abundant Recompence shall our Care and Diligence be rewarded in the next World:* For God hath graciously condescended to oblige himself in the *New Covenant*, to express his bountiful Goodness hereafter unto People, in proportion to the Advances they shall make at present in these *Graces*. Our giving diligence to improve and arrive to a greater perfection in Grace, is one
part

part of our laying up in store, and making provision for the Happiness of our Souls hereafter. If we give diligence to add to our Faith Vertue, and to Vertue Knowledge, and to Knowledge Temperance, and to Temperance Patience, and to Patience Godliness, and to Godliness brotherly Kindness, and to brotherly Kindness Charity; if these things be in us, and we give diligence that they may abound, they will evidence that our Souls are endued with a vital and divine Principle, that our Religion is not a bare empty Name, they will assure us that we shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministred to us abundantly, into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 2 Pet. 1. 5. &c.

Some of those Graces are peculiar to this present state, there being no room for them in the future; yet they must not by any means be omitted or neglected. We must be very careful to approve our selves faithful and diligent in the acting of them, as we have opportunity; for in some cases, the Divine Principle hath hardly any other way to exert it self but in these Acts. Or if these be not the only ways whereby it can exert it

self; yet these are the ways in some cases, wherein its exerting it self, will be best accommodated to our present Condition and Circumstances. These Graces are of singular use to our selves at present; their Discovery will be of extraordinary advantage to others. And to engage and excite us to be diligent in them, God hath been pleased to assure us (that though we shall have no occasion to exercise them when we have laid aside our *earthly Tabernacles*) he will recompence our attending to, and practising them at present, with a *very liberal and bountiful Reward* in the next World. So that this is another way of *laying up Treasures* for our selves *against the time to come*.

We have also many *Duties* to perform whilst we are here, which we may take notice of, either as *Acts of Obedience* unto God, who doth enjoin them, or as *Means* we are to use by Divine Appointment, for the obtaining of Grace, and such Supplies from above as we have occasion of, or as *Instances* wherein Graces are to be exercised. These we should have a regard unto, as contributing much to our *Dying with Advantage*. If we attend to the performing of them in all these

these *Respects*, as we ought, we shall assuredly reap much *Profit* from them at present, and hereafter we shall find that our *Labour* was not in vain; for God hath graciously promised a Reward to those who acquit themselves well in these Matters.

Our first Care must be, that our Souls be wrought to a *Preparation and Meekness* for the *heavenly State*: For God will not admit any thither, but those he has before made meet for it. All external *Acts* and *Operations*, whatever specious Aspect they appear under, which do not flow from this *general Preparation*, are but counterfeit, and will not avail us any thing to future Blessedness.

Afterward, our great Care must be to live in the constant and diligent exercise of this *Divine Principle*, and to perform all the *Duties* God hath commanded us, and to improve as much as we can in them all; for, as I hinted in a former Meditation, we do hereby lay up provision for our Souls against hereafter.

God will proceed with us in that way he hath determined, and made known to us in the Gospel. Though he will receive every

every Soul to *Happiness*, which at the leaving the Body is really prepared for it; yet every one's *Advancement* in the *Heavenly Kingdom*, will be in proportion to the *improvement* he made in *Grace* and *Duty*, and the *diligence* he gave to this purpose during the *present Life*. Hence those who have been of a *shorter standing*, and have come later under the *Mercy* of the *New Covenant*, but have in that shorter space made *greater Improvements*, than others who were in *Christ* before them, will in the next World be preferred above them: *The first shall be last, and the last first.*

It will be of great use to us, as we read the holy Scriptures, to take a *special notice* of those *Graces*, and those *external Performances*, on which God doth lay a *singular Stress*, and to which he makes most *particular Promises*; and though we must have an *universal Respect* to all his *Commands*, yet to apply our selves with *eminent Care* and *Diligence*, to make a great *proficiency* in those he *peculiarly recommends* to us, considering our *particular States* and *Circumstances*.

We have been often told of a *twofold Preparation* for Death : 1. *Habitual*. 2. *Actual*. These have been discoursed of in very *pious Strains*, and to very *profitable Purposes*, by very Learned, Worthy, and Good Men ; and they ought to be very seriously, conscientiously, and diligently minded and attended to by every one, who sincerely desires to die safely, and to leave this World with comfort.

This *Habitual Preparation* comprehendeth all I have taken notice of, as necessary to the *Preparation* I have been speaking of, and what our *Preparation*, strictly considered, doth consist in. It comprizes all the proper and genuine *Effects, Fruits, and Consequences*, which result, spring, and follow from that *Preparation* ; all that is necessary to preserve the *pious Soul* in its *Preparation*, 'till the Lord shall be pleased to deliver it from that *Combat and Warfare* it must sustain and manage, as long as its *union* with the Body shall last ; and all that pertains to its making provision for it self, against the time when it shall enter into the *Eternal World*.

Briefly,

Briefly, This *Habitual Preparation* doth consist in a true and hearty *repenting* of all our Sins ; a sincere and unfeigned *cloſing* with the Lord Jesus Christ, and *submitting* to the *Gospel-Terms* for *Pardon* and *Salvation* ; an entire, faithful, and solemn *devoting* of our selves to God and his Service ; a conscientious and strict *reſtraining* from every thing we understand God hath declared *diſpleaſing* to him ; a serious, diligent *exerciſing* our selves daily in the *Duties of Piety and Religion* ; an industrious sober attending to, and following the *Busineſſes of our particular Stations and Callings* ; and a faithful employing the *Talents* we are entrusted with, to those good *Ends and Purpoſes* for which God hath *beſtowed* them.

To do thus, is to be *diligent*, to be *found in peace* ; hereby we lay up a good *Foundation*, a good *Treasure for the time to come*. He that honestly applies himself to this course, and faithfully persists in it, is in a good *condition*, and if it shall please God that he shall die *ſuddenly*, by some *unforeſeen, unexpected Providence*, being found in this estate, he will be ſure to *inherit the Bleſſing* : *Bleſſed is that Servant, whom his Lord, when*
hae

he cometh, shall find so doing, Matt h. 24. 46.

If we have neglected our Preparation hitherto, the uncertainty of the time of our Death, should powerfully excite and quicken us to improve the *present season*, to prepare for a happy *departure*; because we are not sure, but if we neglect this opportunity, we may die before we are in a *state of Peace*. Delay not to apply your selves to this so *important*, so *necessary a Work*; no, not till to *morrow*; for you know not what a *Day* may bring forth.

Actual Preparation for Death, doth consist mainly, in a serious *renewing* of our *Repentance*, *confessing* our Sins to God as particularly as we can, and their several Aggravations, with *godly sorrow and contrition of Heart* for them, earnestly entreating and imploring God's *Mercy, Pardon, and Forgiveness*, in the Name, and for the Merits sake of the *Lord Jesus Christ*, *acting Faith* with vigour on the All-sufficiency and Faithfulness of the *Lord Jesus*, multiplying all the *Acts of Beneficence and Goodness* we are able, whereby the *Interest of Piety and Vertue* may be furthured in the World, exerting the

the strongest Acts of holy *Love, Hope, Desire*, and the devoutest *Passions*; and chearfully *commending our Spirits* (if God shall please now to put an end to our lives here) into *the hands of our heavenly Father* and most *compassionate Saviour*.

This Preparation we should solemnly apply our selves to, more especially when we are arrested by Pains and Sickneses, and are thereby obliged to retire from the World and its Incumbrances, and have particular reason to apprehend Death very nigh.

Yet it would be of no *small Advantage* to us, if we would with seriousness endeavour to put our selves into a *dying frame and posture*, by exercising our selves affectionately all these ways, as if we were presently to *expire*, whenever God doth give us solemn notices of our own and human *Frailty*, by visiting any in the *Families* where we live, or any of our *Friends, Relations, or Neighbours*, with Sicknes or Death, or when we are invited to attend the *Funerals* of them that are deceased.

Hereby we should be kept in an excellent, gracious frame :: This would make
Death

Death more familiar to us, whereby it would lose much of its Frightfulness. Thus we should attain to a great expertness in the *Art of dying well and comfortably*, against the time when we shall have the most urgent occasion to exert all these *dying Graces*, and *heroick Christian Acts*, in their greatest strength. Dying even daily in this manner, would be a very sure way to die comfortably, when we shall live no longer here.

Most Powerful, Great, and Holy God! thy Law, I must acknowledge, is like thy Self, Holy, Just, and Terrible! Yea, I must own it to be good, though by my detestable *Rebellion* I lie most justly obnoxious to all the *Curses* it doth denounce! If thou wilt make me feel and shriek under thy Wrath for ever, I must confess throughout eternal Horrors, that thou art Holy, True, and Righteous altogether! If I be damn'd to everlasting Torments, let no reviling Word break forth, no murmuring Thought rise in my Heart against thy sacred Majesty! O may my hearty Hatred of my Sins, exceed my Fears, my Sense of all the Plagues they have deserved! Most miserable, unhappy, helpless Wretch! what shall I do?
whither

whither shall I fly? Alas! no place can skreen from God's incensed Anger! no Creature can protect!

Yet I have heard there's *One* who can deliver, and save, the very worst of *Sinners*, who seeks to him for help!

O most compassionate and most gracious *Jesus*! who can'st to seek and save the Lost! Hast thou not said? Are not these Words thy own? Thy faithful Promise, O thou most true and faithful Witness! *Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out?* Dost thou not call, invite, intreat *the weary, and the heavyloaden to come to thee?* Dost thou not promise thou wilt give them *rest?* Is't not thy Office now to intercede for such? Shall those miscarry who repose themselves on thee? Thy Righteousness is every way compleat! can make amends for all my Wickedness, though monstrous out of measure! Thy Merits cannot be exhausted! Though I have broke the Law in every Branch, and have deserved Hell more often than I have spoke or thought, yet is thy Satisfaction absolute, for all who entertain thy Call, who believe thy Word, and trust their Souls with thee! O here behold and
pity

pity a sinking, perishing, damning *Wretch*, whom none can help but thou alone!

Now, Mighty Saviour, interpose between revenging Justice, and the unworthiest and most vile of all those Sinners for whom thou madest thy Self a *Sacrifice*! plead, plead with thy Father, on my behalf, thy fullest and most grateful *Merits*!

Most Righteous God! I now appear before thee in thy *Beloved's Name*! I plead before thee his most perfect *Righteousness*! I humbly implore thy *Mercy*, for the sake of his most Precious and Appeasing *Blood*! Grant, Lord, O grant me this Request, for his dear sake! Deliver me from the *Power of Darkness*, and translate me into the *Kingdom of thy Dear Son*!

Let everlasting Honour, Praise, and Glory, be ascribed to the *Eternal Author of Eternal Grace*!

Most Holy and most Blessed *Jesus*! I do with gladness, and without reserve, commit my self to thee! Most worthy and most gracious Lord! command me what thou wilt, only vouchsafe to give thy *Holy Spirit* to subdue my Lusts, and
to

to dispose, encline, and help me to perform thy Pleasure! Save me from Sin, or save me not from Hell! Make me to bear thy Image! Help me to do thy Will! Prepare me for thy Presence! Assist me in thy Work! Let thy Good Spirit be my Guide! Thy purest Love constrain me! Make thy own Service my Delight! Thy Glory all my Aim!

O Lord! thy Being and Perfections have no Bounds; they infinitely transcend created Comprehension! Thy Thoughts, thy Works, thy Ways, are like thy Self! They more exceed the vastest reach of my inquisitive, active *Mind*, than those blessed Spirits which dwell above, do these gross, stupid things that strike upon, and irritate my dull, feeble Sense; than their peculiar Pleasures do excel these faint and barren, these poor and dry Sensations, which here do darken, blind, deprave, and stupify my Soul!

How shall I pertinently admire the great mysterious Wonders of thy unbounded Grace, to fallen degenerate Man! What Love was this, to pity curst, provoking, wilful Rebels! Lord,
thou

thou didst give thy only Son to save the
 Lost! Most condescending Grace! The
 Eternal Son of God hath took our Na-
 ture, that by enduring Pains, which none
 are able to conceive, he might secure
apostate Sinners from Torments which
 would never end, and open a way to
 heavenly Happiness for those, who did
 deserve to suffer for ever, the extreamest
 Plagues in Hell! Thou didst not ut-
 terly reverse thy first and pure, though
 now affrighting Law; but now thou
 hast established, with them who do be-
 lieve, a much more Blessed Covenant, in
 thy Beloved's Blood! Thou loudly of-
 ferest Pardon, Grace, and Peace, and
 Holiness, with everlasting Joy, on the
 most worthy and most gracious Terms,
 to thy most vile, impure, and ill-deser-
 ving Enemies! Thou dost confirm all
 this to every one who doth unfeignedly
 betake himself to Christ, who doth in-
 deed repent, and heartily believe in him.
 Thou call'st us all to take this course;
 thou dost exert thy drawing Strength and
 Love: Those who do follow thy Ad-
 vice, who close with thy most frequent,
 cordial, fervent Invitations, thou enter-
 tain'st, dost welcome, and embrace!

on the 11th of June Most
gracious Father

Most Loving and most Meritorious Jesus! the Purchases of thy Blood are Great, even to *astonishment*! Thy Gifts to Sinners are more for number, and of greater value, than mortal *Nature* can report! Thou giv'st thy Holy Spirit to mortifie Men's Lusts, to heal their Souls, to settle in their Hearts a heavenly God-like Love, with reigning and victorious Power! Thou fittest them for thy blessed Presence; dost give Supplies to make them grow more like thy Self, 'till thou shalt judge it meet to call them to thy glorious Kingdom!

The Joys, the Glories, the Crowns, and Dignities thou wilt conferr at last, we cannot understand, 'till this thick vail is gone, and we shall see thee *as thou art*: *Beloved, now are we the Sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is,* 1 John 3. 2.

Blessing and Glory, and Wisdom, and Thanksgiving, and Honour, and Power, and Might, be unto our God for ever and ever, Amen, Rev. 7. 12.

Deluded, sensual, self-will'd Fools!
Think once before you die; for die you
must;

must ; how soon you cannot tell. O venture not your Souls, and everlasting Joys, for Riches, Honours, Lands, or the Delights of Sense ! All these being laid together, are no more than one false, empty *Dream*, a moments *Shadow* ; haste unto Christ ; by Faith lay hold on him ; cease not your suit, 'till you are chang'd, 'till you are meet for Heaven ; for if you die *unpardoned* and *unsanctified*, you'll die, you'll perish, you'll be damn'd for ever !

Now, O my Soul ! reflect, consider thy present state ; for seeing thou dost not know the time when thou must leave this Body, bethink thy self what sways thee most, what thy Condition will be, if thou shalt speedily be called hence : What Thoughts hast thou of present earthly Things, of worldly Pumps, of airy Fame, of fading Wealth, of sinful Lusts and Pleasures ? Are these the things thou mindest most ? Dost place thy Rest in them ? What wilt thou do ? What good canst thou expect, when thou shalt be as distant from them all, as *Heaven* is from *Earth* ?

Hast thou observed, hast thou been thoroughly satisfied, that *God* is
Holy,

Holy, Just, and True? His Law most perfect, strict, severe? That every violation of it is so heinous, it makes obnoxious to eternal Vengeance?

Dost thou indeed perceive how ugly, vile, and hideous every Sin is? How it makes thy God thy Foe, and renders thee so wretched, all Creatures cannot help thee? Is Sin thy Burthen, and thy only Trouble? Dost grieve and mourn for it alone? Dost hate it more than Hell?

Hast thou attended to thy Saviour's gracious Call? Hast thou by Faith applied thy self to Him, to justify and save thee? Hast thou resigned thy self sincerely to his Service?

Dost thou in truth perceive his Spirit hath mortified thy Lusts, and formed thee to his likeness? Are thy Affections settled on the heavenly State? Dost make God's Word thy only Rule, his Promises thy Support?

May this be the fixed and prevailing Temper of my Soul, as long as I am here! May I encrease in Grace, grow strong in Faith, abound in Love, improve in my Conformity in every part, unto my Lord and Saviour! Let every Duty be my Work,

most Work, and every good and pious Act
 my Joy! O may my chief Delight at
 present be in those Flights of Soul, which
 will in their Perfection be Heaven's
 Work for ever! O may I every day a-
 bound in *sacred Admiration*! Let not
 one hour pass without some *holy Aspira-*
tion! At every turn, let Love to God
 and Christ, exert it self with utmost
 Strength! Let all my Life be spent in
 joyful *Praise* and *Thanks*! O that in
 these I may arrive to the *Seraphick Fer-*
our's!

Whilst I abide on Earth; let me ob-
 serve my Heart, and watch my Ways;
 reverse my Faults, by seeking Peace, and
 labouring to amend: Improve thy *Insti-*
tutions, Lord, to those *good Ends* for
 which thou hast ordained them!

Lord, may thy Holy Spirit assure my
 Heart, bear Witness to my Soul, that I
 am thine; that I shall surely rest with
 Christ for ever! I know thou deal'st not
 thus with all who die in peace; why then
 should I expect it? I seek it in Obedience
 to thy Word; yet if thou think not
 meet to grant it me, *thy Will be done*;
 only preserve me faithful unto Death.
 Yet if thou should'st vouchsafe it me,

F

Lord!

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Lord! with what Triumph, what excess of Joy, shall I forsake this tender Flesh, and leave this flattering World!

What must I now conclude, O *drowsie Soul*! Why dost thou flag so soon! Lord, when shall I experience the Happiness of that blessed State, where I shall never be tired with any of those divine Employments which do pertain unto it?

O sluggish, weary Soul! let me observe what great advantage those enjoy, who spend their freshest, their most early Years, in *seeking God*, and *working Righteousness*, minding their God, their Souls, their future State!

Lord, grant that all the young ones of this Age may truly know and love, obey and serve thy self. How happy will they feel themselves! What Prospects then may all Men have, of *calm*, of *peaceful*, and of *prosperous Times*!

MEDITATION IV.

On Eccles. 12. Vers. 1. *Remember thy Creator in the days of thy Youth.*

[Occasioned by a considerable number of People attending the Funeral of a very young Person.]

THE occasion of our being assembled at this time, doth solemnly call us to much seriousness of Thoughts, and a great composedness of Spirit: It is proper to put both *me* and *you* in mind of the *Frailty of Human Life*, and how certain it is that every one of us shall die. If the tender Sprigs are nipp'd off, the Branches that are of longer growth, will not escape lopping.

The Wise-man tells us, *Eccles. 7. 2.* *It is better to go to the House of Mourning, than to the House of Feasting; for that is the end of all Men, and the living will lay it to his Heart.* Lord, grant that we who do survive, may so consider and improve that *Providence of thine*, which hath now brought us together, that we may be duly

affected with our *Frailty*, and in *season* provide well for our own *Departure*. Though we are all, through the *Kindness* of God yet alive, and in *Health*, we do not know how soon we must every one have our *Lodging* in that *House*, which is appointed for all the living.

It is appointed for all Men once to die, Heb. 9. 27. *What Man is he that liveth, and shall not see Death? Shall he deliver his Soul from the hand of the Grave?* Psal. 89. 48.

With what wonder may we be seized, when we reflect and consider how we are arrived to our *present Age*! With what thankful Acknowledgements should we adore that *careful and tender Providence*, which hath preserved us from that *stroke*, which hath cut off such numerous *Multitudes* in all the *Stages of Life*, through which we have *passed*! When we daily see and hear of so many of *every Age*, of *every Size*, of *every Rank* that die, how should we be excited to a very speedy and a very serious *Preparation* for that time, when we must unavoidably yield to the *Stroke of Death*, and which may fall on us we know not how *soon*.

The Wise-man's *Advice* (in Eccles. 12.1.) may minister some Assistance to our present speedy Preparation for our own Dissolution, if we do consider and improve it aright.

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy Youth : In which Words we may take notice of two things ; First, *A Duty recommended*. Secondly, *The Season when People should apply themselves to the performing of it*. When I have a little considered these Two Parts of Solomon's Advice, and in a few Words, put you in mind of what importance it is to us to follow his Counsel, I will conclude with some plain familiar Application.

First, Let us very briefly consider the Duty he doth recommend to us, *Remember thy Creator*. Here I might take notice of, 1. The Object. 2. The Act. First, The Object, *Thy Creator* ; the Infinite and Eternal GOD. What Object so proper, so worthy to be constantly in our Minds ? It is the Character of very bad People, that *God is not in all their Thoughts*. Certainly it would be much better with us, did we more frequently converse with God. *Unmindfulness and Forgetfulness of God*, is a very great Fault

and the *Source* from whence a great deal of *Evil* doth flow. A reverend, awful Regard to our Creator, would have a very benign, sweet, and profitable Influence on our Hearts and Lives. Secondly, The *Akt, Remember*; which notes our having *genuine* and *right* *Notions* of God, so riveted and settled in our Minds, as never to be at a *distance*, but always in a readiness for us to have recourse unto, for our *Conduct* and *Guidance* upon all occasions; and our using of them continually for this purpose. How much would a *real Acquaintance* with God, and a hearty *steady Converse* with him, contribute to our *Security* and *Happiness*. I am sure, could I truly say, *Lord, I am still with thee*, I should pass through this World with more *Innocence*, and with less *Disturbance* than I do. How loose should I be from *Creature-Comforts*, did I maintain a constant *familiar Correspondence* with the God of all *Consolation*. How free should I be from those *ill Impressions*, the *Calamities* of *Time* do too often make on me, did my *Heart* continually abide with that *God*, in whose presence there are *Rivers of Joy*, and *Pleasures for evermore*? With what ease should

Should I part with *Children, Relations, Friends*, and all the things of *this World*, was my Soul at all times *sensibly united* with that *God*, from whom infinitely greater *Blessings* do perpetually flow? With what satisfaction should I think of *Death*, with what Joy should I welcome its *approach*, did I always with becoming Affection keep up the *Remembrance* of that *God*, whose *Loving-kindness* is better than *Life*?

The Duty is there recommended by way of *Inference* from what had been said before. *Solomon* in this *Book* gives an account how curious a search he had made into all those things of this *World*, from which *People*, according to their several *Inclinations, Opinions, and Passions*, do commonly expect great *Matters*; and that after the *exactest Trial* he could make of them, he found there was nothing in them but *vanity*; and that they could not afford any thing to those who should set their *Hearts* on them, but *Disappointment* and *vexation of Spirit*. He concluded the former Chapter with these Words: *Childhood and Youth are vanity.* The things which *Children* and *Young folk* doat on, and place their *Happiness*

in, are vain and unsatisfying ; yea, *Childhood* and *Youth* are *vanity*. Those who are in these *Stages* and *Parts* of *Human Life*, are liable to *Death*, and not sure of *out-living those Ages*, and of arriving to *riper Years*. The things then that People in those years are ordinarily most delighted with, cannot yield true and full Satisfaction, or make them happy. From thence the Wise-man inferrs, we ought very early and speedily to apply ourselves in good earnest to *Religion* : Remember now, or Remember therefore, thy Creator.

Get thy self thoroughly perswaded that thou art a *Creature*, and hast thy whole Dependance on that Great and Glorious God, who gave thee thy *Being*, and made thee *what thou art* : Preserve constantly a strong and powerful sense, that *thy Times are in his hands*, and that it is he only who can make thee happy. Actually *choose* him with due deliberation, for thy only and *sovereign Good* ; resolve to secure to thy self the *fruition* of him, by a diligent serious applying thy self to those *Methods* and *Courses* he hath prescribed for this end, and constantly persevere in doing thus.

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This is the only way to be truly happy; therefore do not deceive thy self with the vain pursuit of other things; for he only who made thee what thou art, can make thee really and perfectly Blessed. There is nothing but the enjoyment of God, can be a satisfying Portion to thee: Set not thy Heart on any thing but the full fruition of him, and make it thy principal Business to know, to love, to serve, to obey and please him, that thus thou mayst be sure to enjoy his Favour; for in that thy Happiness doth consist.

Secondly, *The Time when People ought to apply themselves to perform this Duty: In the days of thy Youth.*

This is to be the great and main Business of our Lives, and therefore we should set about it as soon as possible. When we come to the use of our Reason, and are in a capacity to judge and make a choice for our selves, we must take care to proceed wisely; to find out, by just enquiry and consideration, what our true and only Good is; what it is that will not fail to make us happy, when it is enjoyed: Now this is God alone. Then we must determine, that we will take him for our Portion, our Treasure, our exceeding

ceeding Joy, and chief Good. And we must fixedly resolve to take that course, to secure our selves his *Favour* and *Love*, and the *everlasting Fruition* of Himself, which he hath appointed; and actually pursue the same with great care and diligence as long as we live.

Seeing the things of this World, which at present flatter our *Senses* and *Imaginations*, are so *vain* in themselves, and so *troublesom* in their *Events*, to those who look for Happiness from them, it should be our care to be very early in making a true Judgment, and a wise Choice for our selves. And if we have already, through Rashness and Inconsideration, or any thing worse, mistaken, we must speedily rectifie our Errour, and fix upon our *Creator* as our only Happiness; and immediately *apply* ourselves to seek after, and make sure to our selves an Interest in Him, as our only and chief Good, by a constant and strenuous following of those *Directions* he hath given.

Thirdly, Let me now put you in mind, that it is of great Importance to us, to perform this Duty here recommended, and to apply our selves to it in the Season here directed. If we do not chuse
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God for our chief Good, but do place our Happiness in any thing else, we wretchedly mistake, and all our Labour and Pains will not only be lost, but will heighten and encrease our Misery. Nothing can be of greater moment to us, than to be sure to fix on that, which when enjoyed, will not fail our Expectation. Now the things of this World never yielded any Man full Satisfaction; they have failed and disappointed all those who have look'd for Happiness from them; and they will most certainly serve all those so, who do depend on them. May not your own Experience convince you? Though you have acquired more than you at first thought would do your Business, and content you, do you not still find you want something more? Let People say they have enough of the World, (if they please) yet if they still plod and contrive, and drudge to heap up more, I am sure though they may not have *Hearts to make a good use of what they have*, yet they have *Hearts which do desire more than they have*; which they would not have, if they did *really believe* they had enough. The bare enjoyment of any thing here, though it may please for the

the present, yet it will not answer all occasions. If we could refrain from desiring a greater quantity, and abundance of any thing, on which we have set our Hearts; our bare enjoying of it, would not *serve our turn*. We must have this Enjoyment *continued*, or else our present Enjoyment is so far from making us happy, it will heighten our Trouble and Affliction, when we are dispossessed of it. Now tho' the things of this World may be obtained, yet we are not sure of their continuance: But if we could obtain as much as we can desire of these Things, and could be certain they shall last and continue with us, as long as we shall live here, they could not make us happy, because we can not carry them into the other World: *When he dieth, he shall carry nothing away; his Glory shall not descend after him*, Psal. 49. 17. And if we could carry them with us, there would be so great an *Alteration* in the other World, these things would do us no Service, nor be of any use to us *there*. Their Disappointment will be dreadful indeed, who place their Happiness in such Things, as will at most be serviceable to them only whilst they live here,

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seeing they will live to all eternity, without any thing that will do them good.

We are capable of enjoying *God* for ever; and therefore nothing but such an *Enjoyment* of him, can make us *fully Blessed*; all other things must needs fall short of filling up this *vast Capacity*, because they are not *God*; and we cannot be *perfectly happy*, 'till we *enjoy* what is every way *commensurate* to our *Capacity*.

This full fruition of *God*, cannot be obtained, but in the way he prescribes: So that if we will attain it, we must seek it in that way he directs. It doth not necessarily belong to any, but is a *Privilege* he is graciously pleased to vouchsafe; and therefore it must be look'd after, and received in that way he hath thought fit to establish.

Now *God* hath certified, that he will not approve and admit any to dwell with him for ever, but those who are truly godly, who know, and chuse, and love him as their principal Good; who do sincerely devote themselves to his Service and Honour; who do constantly and resolutely adhere to him, and make it
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their chief Business to improve in their Obedience unto him. Is not this the whole *Tenour* of the Holy Scriptures? More particularly, is not this most expressly declared throughout the Fifteenth *Psalms*, and in *Rev.* 22. 14, 15. in *Rom.* 2. 6. &c.

It is very ordinary for People to say, They do acknowledge it is *only God who can make them happy*. But it is their great *Unhappiness*, that they have learned to flatter and perswade themselves, that the *special Love* of God at present, and the *full fruition* of him hereafter, may be reconciled with their *enjoying* of their *Lusts*, and indulging themselves in all their wicked and *sinful Gratifications* whilst they live in this World, or at least, that they may take their swing, and follow their carnal Inclinations at present, and safely enough *deferr* their *Preparation* for another World, 'till they are *nearer* leaving this. Though People daily see, that many die in their Childhood and Youth; yet because they perceive that some live *much longer*, they easily perswade themselves to think, that their Lives must be of the *longest extent and duration*. Nor is it much to be wondered

their dered at, that those who are *vain* and
the *thoughtless* enough to presume at this rate,
es? should buoy up themselves also with a
ex- *Perswasion*, that they can *repent*, *believe*,
nth and *make their peace with God*, and pre-
2. pare for *Heaven*, with *very little ado*, and
whenever they please.

But if we will be sure to secure true
y, Happiueſs for our selves, we must re-
ho member our Creator *betimes*, in the days
at of our *Youth*; or, if that Age be over
ro with us, and we neglected that Work
e then, we must *speedily* apply our selves
e with utmost seriousness to the great *Busi-
ness of Religion*.

Youth is the most proper and fittest
Season to set about this Work; that be-
ing the Time in which it may be atten-
ded to, and done with most ease and
best success: He that in good earnest
applies himself to it, in his earliest Years,
as he is most capable of admitting the
strongest Impressions; so he will be freer
from those *Prejudices* and *evil Customs*,
which will be sure to take place, and will
require abundance of pains to contradict
and vanquish them, if this Business be
neglected 'till they have got much
strength, by his putting it off, 'till he is of
more Growth and Age.

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People will pursue Happiness unavoidably; and having fixed on a *wrong Object*, and inured themselves to the use of such *means*, as they fancy expedient to possess themselves of it, they will be very hardly brought to alter their *Choice*: For expecting satisfaction from such an *Object*, *Disappointment* it self will scarce change their *Opinion* and *Resolution*: They will hold their Conclusion, and continue of this Mind, that what they have placed their Happiness in, may be obtained. And though their *Endeavours*, time after time, fail and deceive their *Hopes*; they impute not this to their first Choice, but to a Mistake in their Method. And therefore though on such Occasions they may be induced to change their *Course*, and try other *Expedients*, they hold fast their *first Principle*. If their Attempts be prosperous, and yet their Expectation is not answered by what they do obtain, they reckon not this to be a Defect in the thing they have chosen, but lay it to the degree and measure which they have acquired, and therefore increase their diligence to get more of it, conceiving they shall find that *perfect Satisfaction* in the measures which

which remain to be obtained, which they do not find in what they now possess, though perhaps at first they thought it lay in what they now enjoy. And thus without end, and against all Reason, they perpetually tire themselves in seeking Happiness, in what they constantly find Disappointment.

When Men are possessed with a Persuasion, that their Happiness doth consist in any thing else, than the enjoyment of God, or that this may be obtained some other way, than by unfeigned practical Religion, true Holiness, and sincere Obedience to the Laws of the Gospel, they will not be prevailed with, to mind these things to any purpose, 'till they are effectually recovered from their first Distemper and Errour.

So that if People do not remember their Creator in the days of their Youth, and before they are pre-engaged and determined another way, they will be in great danger of never applying themselves to it, to any purpose. For though they should be quite disheartned from any longer pursuing what they first fixed on, yet there are many other things which have a nearer affinity with their most predominant

minant *Inclinations* and *Passions*, which will hinder them very much from a due considering of, and fixing on God and Religion in its Truth and Power. When they find they are out of the way, they are willing to hope, and then to conclude they have wandered *but a little*, and so reckon that the next *Road* they come to, is that they should have *walk'd in*. At most they run quite to the other *extream*, and so err on that hand, as much as they did before on the other. Thus Men turn from *Superstition* to *Prophaneness*, and from *Prophaneness* to *Superstition*; from a *rude* and *outrageous affronting of God* in their *Words and Actions*, to a *timorous endeavouring* to pacifie and appease him, by their *own or other Men's Devices*. In like manner, they turn from *Prodigality* to *Covetousness*, and from *Covetousness* to *Prodigality*. Finding themselves mistaken, they may run about enquiring, *Who will shew them any good?* But they are of that *Temper*, they will be sure to take *any one's Advice* rather than *God's*.

This may be the *only Season* that shall be allotted People, wherein they can apply themselves to this Business. This is a Business of such a nature, it must be done,

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done; we must apply our selves to it in good earnest before we die, or we shall be everlastingly *undone*. Those who are young, may die in their *youthful Tears*; they are not certain they shall live to *Manhood*. Those who have past their *Youth*, and neglected this *Work*, have no Time they can call their *own*, except the present: And therefore neither the *one* nor the *other*, may deferr this *Work* one jot longer, without running a most *dreadful Risque*: For if they neglect it now, their Lives may, for ought they know, be ended, before they concern themselves about *that* which should be their *principal Work*, live they ever so long.

That which must be *once done*, or we shall perish for ever, cannot be done *too soon*; but it may be easily deferred, 'till we shall not have time to *dispatch* it. What will their Condition be, who delay it 'till it is *too late* to set about it? What shall they say for themselves, with what Consideration shall they support and comfort themselves, when they find they must miscarry for ever; and that this is the fruit and effect of their own *Choice and Wilfulness*? Their Fault will not

not admit of any Excuse. With what *Indignation* and *Fury* will they be eternally filled, by their *endless upbraiding themselves* with their own *prodigious, monstrous Folly*?

Fourthly, Let us now reflect on, and make a little Application of these *Thoughts*. The *Wise-man's* Counsel may instruct and mind us what our *Chief Good is*, wherein our only *Happiness* doth consist, and what *course* we must take, in order to our being truly and compleatly *Blessed*: That if we have made a right *Choice*, and have followed it *honestly*, we may be *confirmed* in it, and *assisted* in a regular prosecution of it: That if we have done otherwise, we may be convinced of our *Errour*, seasonably *correct* it, and approve our selves truly *prudent*. It is a *dreadful thing* for a Man to fall under the Power of *Sin* and *Folly* to such a degree, as not to be able to *consider* his *Mistake*, and say to himself, *Is there not a Lye in my right hand?* Will not this deceive, confound, and torment me, which I now set my *Heart* on, and look for *Satisfaction* from?

Let these Thoughts satisfy us, that Religion, in its Truth, Purity, and Power, is not peculiar to grey and withered Age; it belongs to young People, and is that which they should make their principal Business. Grace is the chief Beauty and Ornament of Youth; there is not any thing doth so much become, and which will do young People so much good, as a mighty Sense and Awe of God; as their having their Hearts filled with a great Veneration of, and love to God; as a serious conscientious exercising themselves in Devotion, and in all Vertue and Godliness of living.

You who are young, see that you remember your Creator now, in the days of your Youth. Chuse God deliberately for your chief Good and only Happiness; labour to know him, to understand those Discoveries he hath made of Himself; to be affected mightily with the Love he hath manifested, in giving his own Son to be your Saviour. Contemplate much the Divine Perfections and Attributes; study often the Life of the Holy Jesus; labour to be powerfully affected with his Sufferings for Sin; consider his Amiability, his Condescension, his gracious Offers to you, his

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his importunate Invitations, his Fulness, the Glory he enjoys, and how affectionately he entreats you to come unto him, that you may be prepared for it, and everlastingly inherit it with him. Acquaint your selves with God and Christ betimes; let the Fear, and Love, and Service of God, and the careful keeping of his Commandments, be your principal Business, and your chief Delight.

This you must do, or you can have no just ground to hope you shall be happy. You are now in health, you think you are strong, and (it may be) you dream of living many Years: But you do not know how soon you shall lie down in the Dust. Are not many of your Age constantly laid in the Grave? Can you not easily call to mind when some or other about your Age, and as likely (to all human appearance) to live as you be, did unexpectedly die? Consider, young Man, or young Woman; What if God had taken thee away at that time? What would have been thy estate in the other World? Wast thou prepared for Heaven; or must thou not conclude thou hadst died a Stranger to God, under the Power of thy Lusts, void of Grace, ignorant of Christ,

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an Enemy to Religion in the Power and Practice of it? And wilt thou *sturdily* continue in that *estate*? Wilt thou go on to abuse the *Patience* and *Mercy* God doth exercise towards thee? If this long-suffering Goodness of God's toward thee, do not lead thee to *Repentance*, but thou wilt still continue *obstinately* in thy evil courses, thy living longer will be but a treasuring up of *more Wrath* for thy self, against the Day of *Wrath*, and the revelation of God's most righteous and most terrible *Vengeance*. What if thou prove the *Person* who shall die next, what is like to be thy Portion to *eternity*? O lay this to thy Heart, and concern thy self presently, with all thy *Might*, to secure thy Soul, and to make eternal *Blessedness* sure to thy self: For if thou resolvest to continue longer in following the sinful *Liberties*, *Pleasures*, *Mirth*, and *Jollities* of Youth, and God shall suddenly cut thee off in that *estate*, what wilt thou do? Thou wilt unavoidably leave all the things thou settest thy Heart on, and wilt by no means escape the *Damnation of Hell*.

But if thou remembrest thy Creator now, and approvest thy self seriously
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and heartily Religious, thou wilt be in a good posture to die at *any time*: And if God shall be pleased to prolong thy Life, this will contribute much to thy *Ease*, and *Comfort*, and *Advantage*, how long soever thy Life shall last; thou wilt now taste those Pleasures which infinitely exceed all the Pleasures of Sin; thou wilt be admirably fortified against Temptations for time to come; thou wilt be in a Condition to make great Progress in Religion; thou wilt always walk under the Care, Protection, and Blessing of Almighty God; thou wilt go through the remainder of thy Work with wonderful delight; thou wilt be a worthy Example, and a great Blessing in thy Generation, and a more abundant Glory will be thy Portion in the next World.

Whereas if thou spendest thy *youthful Years* in *youthful Lusts*, if God should lengthen out thy Life to a more *mature Age*, and then convert thee; yet thy present neglect of what thou art exhorted to, and thy indulging thy self in the *follies*, *Vanities*, and *Sins*, which thou seest *young People* every where addict themselves unto, will then occasion thy unexpressible

be in fible Sorrow and Grief. Were young
 And People sensible what Pain and Trouble,
 thy what Horreur and Regret they are *laying*
 thy up for themselves in this World, if ever
 how they be *effectually* converted, what a
 wilt mighty Check and Restraint would it
 uite- lay upon them at present! Consider
 hou what your *youthful Lusts* will cost you,
 em- that the thoughts thereof may have some
 t be effect upon you. Should a Man spend a
 refs great Estate in his *Youth*, and go a beg-
 un- ging in his *old Age*, every one would be
 ing able to observe, and reflect on his *juve-*
 gh *nile Folly* and *Madness*. Pray consider
 on- what you are doing; you are heaping
 hy up either everlasting Wrath and Ven-
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 xt converting you before you die, you
 escape that, you are treasuring up such
 Vexation and Torment for your selves
 here, as will unconceivably over-weigh
 all the *Diversions* and *Pleasures* (as you
 call them) which you are so *unmeasurably*
 fond of now. What Thoughts hath that
 Man in his elder Years, of his *youthful*
 beloved *Sins*, whose Conscience is awa-
 kened; who calls to mind how he spent
 his *youthful Time*; and who is necessitated

at the remembrance thereof, to cry out with holy *Job*, *Lord, thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the Sins of my Youth?* Chap. 13. 26. Had I done my *Duty* faithfully to preserve my self from youthful Sins, how free should I have been from that Remorse and Anguish, from those black and bitter Reflections, which do sometimes assault me with so much Violence, as would quite overwhelm me, did not the Divine Hand mercifully interpose and support me! *Remember not the Sins of my Youth, O Lord, nor my Transgressions: According to thy Mercy remember thou me, for thy Goodness-sake, O Lord, Psal: 25. 7.*

You that are young, and have heartily applied your selves to this Business, give God the *Glory* of his wonderful rich Grace: Be much in paying him your thankful Acknowledgments for the great things he hath done for your Souls. Be sure you take great care to hold on constantly, and to persevere and improve in that excellent course you are engaged in. Do not decline, but keep up your *Watch*; take heed of Apostacy, of Security, of Presumption, of Formality, of falling from your first Love, of Indifferency in

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Devotion. Do you never forsake the good Ways of the Lord; but be still proceeding forward, and go on from strength to strength, 'till you are admitted to behold and enjoy God in perfect Glory.

You who are Parents, Governours of Families, and have young People under your Care and Government, do what you can to contribute something to the helping of those young Persons you are concerned with, to remember their Creator. Labour to instil good Principles and Notions into them; instruct them in their Duty; endeavour to bring them to a sense of God and their Souls betimes; inure and accustom them to devout Exercises; strive to make them serious in the matters of Religion; keep up the serious solemn Worship of God in your Families, and oblige all your young ones to be present, and to demean themselves reverently. Let them not loiter away the Lord's Day, but preserve them in a good Decorum; and cause them to employ themselves in such pious Exercises, and attend those Religious Services both publick and private, which are proper for that sacred Time. Keep them as much as you can from ill Company, the great

Corrupters of Youth, and encourage them in every thing of Religion: *Train up a Child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it,* Prov. 22. 6. Be sure to set a good Example before them, in your own Carriage and Practice, and pray earnestly for them.

You who have past over your *youthful Years*, and have hitherto neglected this most *necessary Work*, put it off no longer; betake your selves to it immediately: Your Burthen is much encreased; your Guilt is greatly heightned; your Danger is exceeding great. This is the Business in which you should have been concerned to purpose a great many Years ago.

Consider thy self well, and I am persuaded thou wilt find thou art as much for deferring this Business a little longer, as thou wast formerly. Rowze up thy self quickly; for if thou cherish this Temper, it will be thy ruin; thou wilt perish for ever without *remedy*. Awake! awake! *Death, Judgment, and Hell* may be just at hand, for ought thou know'st. Say not, *To morrow, to morrow*; thy Soul may be amongst the Damned (for any thing thou knowest to the contrary) before this Night is past.

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Consider thy state impartially forthwith ; humble thy self deeply before Almighty God ; seek earnestly heartily unto *Jesus Christ*, that thou mayst have pardon and peace with God, through the Efficacy of his *Blood* ; that thy Heart may be changed ; and that the bent of thy Soul, and the course of thy Life may be altered by the Power of the *Holy Spirit*.

Content not thy self with saying, *Thou hopest well ; thou hast heard of Christ , thou believest ; thou sayst thy Prayers ; and, thou comest to Church* : For I tell thee, from the unerring Word of God, That the Hope and Expectation of the Wicked shall perish. Thou mayst have heard of *Christ* to thy perdition ; the Devils believe and tremble. Is not that something more than thou canst truly say for thy self ? Dost thou tremble at the dreadful Word of God against the Wicked ? It is not a rude, formal Saying, Lord, have mercy on me ? Nor an ignorant, graceless, and at best next to a prophane Saying, Our Father which art in Heaven, &c. that will serve thy turn, and avail thee to Salvation ; for the Prayer of the Wicked is an Abomination to the Lord. If thou comest

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to Church, and bring'st thy Vices and Sins with thee thither, and carriest them away with thee again, and continuest a *Worker of Iniquity*, thou wilt be shut out of the *Kingdom of Heaven*; the Lord Jesus will say unto thee, notwithstanding all thy *Pleas and Apologies*, *Depart, thou Worker of Iniquity; I know thee not.*

Set thy self to this Work in good earnest, with all thy might, and make no *delay*: Let all thy worldly Interests *sink*, (though there is no need, nor any danger of that) rather than *thy Soul be lost*. Thy Work is great; deep Humiliation, a great seriousness of Spirit, strong Resolution, fervent Prayers, and earnest Diligence, are necessary. Thy Time is uncertain, and thy everlasting Happiness depends on thy well discharging of this *Duty*.

Lord of all Grace! send down thy *Holy Spirit*, and make the *Word of Exhortation* effectual! O that *every old*, and *every young Sinner* may go home *mourning and lamenting*! may *apply himself*, through thy most gracious and powerful Assistance, so heartily to *remember thee his Creator*, without any farther *delay*, that if he shall live to *enjoy another Season* for thy

thy Publick Worship, he may return effectually reformed, and attend upon thee with great *Reverence, Fervour, and holy Joy*; or if he shall die sooner, he may appear before thee with *Comfort*, and live with thee in *eternal Glory*.

MEDITATION V.

Concerning a holy Indifferency, whether we have the Things of this World, or not; a moderate and good Use of them whilst we have them; and a Readiness to part with them, when God shall call for them.

O My Soul! Set not thy Heart and Affections upon any thing in this world! Seeing I know not the time when I shall die, it cannot any way become me to make a very great Account of any thing here. What Reason can I alledge, why I should be *fond* of any thing this World can afford, when I am not certain that I shall enjoy it, the length of one *single Day*?

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We are too prone to be building *Castles in the Air*; to think of laying our *Designs* deep; to extend our *Projects* to a great distance: And how solicitous are we then to manage them with *Dexterity*? With what *Vigour* do we pursue our *Aims*? With what *Hopes* do we entertain our selves, upon our thinking to bring our Purposes to effect? But were we duly mindful how uncertain our Lives be, we should hardly reconcile our selves to these Indecencies: A due sense of the uncertainty of our Lives, would ease us effectually of our foolish Cares, our painful Labours, our flattering Expectations.

We may die before we compass what we propose; or we may not live to taste the fruit of our Pains; yea, our Lives are so uncertain, we are not sure but we may out-live all our earthly Comforts, may see them die in our hands, wither and perish, before we give up the Ghost. Why should I dote on, and be immoderately concerned for what I may never have, or what I am not sure to keep, as long as I shall fancy I shall have occasion of it? Is it fit for me, whose abode *here* is so very *uncertain*, to suffer any thing
to

to master my Affections to that degree, I cannot want it patiently, nor part with it, without being extremely uneasie and miserable? It will better become me, seeing I am so utterly uncertain when I shall die.

First, *To be in a manner quite indifferent whether I have the things of this World, or have them not.* My Happiness does not consist in the abundance of worldly Things; no part of my Happiness doth necessarily depend on my having any one particular thing I can fix on here below: For though I miss of what I aim at in particular, I may be as well without it, as with it, because something else may serve my turn as well.

There are better and more excellent Objects for me to set my Affections on, which may be certainly obtained.

Indeed, we are to follow our particular Employments with diligence, depending on the Blessing of God for Success, if he shall see fit to prosper our Labours, that we may thereby provide *Necessaries* and *Conveniencies* for our selves, a *Competent Subsistence* for our Families; and what may render us able to supply the *Wants of others*, and to do good and

useful Offices in our Generations. But we should not be *Anxiously* concerned about the *Success* of our Pains, but quietly and cheerfully resign all *Issues and Events* to God.

What Reason, *O my Soul!* canst thou assign why I should not be very well satisfied and rejoyce, tho' my Labours prove *abortive*, when I have faithfully done my Duty in Obedience unto God; seeing the *Event*, whatever it be, doth take place, and is ordered according to the *Infinite Wisdom*, and exceeding good *Pleasure* of my *Heavenly Father*? If I fail of *Success* through my own fault and defect, I have matter of trouble, because I have not done my *Duty* as I should: But if I labour only in dependance on God's Blessing, not prescribing to him, but referring the Issue entirely to him, without expecting *Success*, unless he in his infinite Wisdom and Goodness shall think fit to make my Pains prosperous, what reason can I find why I should be disturbed, having faithfully done my part, though he is pleased to suspend, or deny *Success*? Why should I desire any thing to my *Hurt*? Let me constantly in Obedience to God, make use of the means he doth allow

allow and appoint me, with reference to my Life, and present Welfare; but let me perfectly *refer* my *Life*, and my *Labours* to his *Disposal*, and acquiesce in, and be alike well pleased with his good Will, whether I *reach* what I particularly aim at, or do *miss* of it? If God will either *retrench* my occasion of it, or *provide* for me some other way, which I am not at present aware of, I shall have no ground to be *disturbed*. Lord! thou dost best understand what is *fittest* for me! Grant that I may freely and cheerfully *consent* to thy doing me good *thy own way*!

Have I any cause to be *solicitous*, and *anxiously* concerned for any one of the Enjoyments here below? I am not sure I shall live *to obtain it*: or, that I shall have *occasion* to use it. I am not certain, that if I do obtain it, it will be serviceable and *useful* to me, as long as I shall *think* I do *need* it: I neither know whether I shall live till I have it, though I apprehend I am in a very fair way to catch, and *lay hold* of it presently; nor that I shall not live till I am *without* it again. Why may not I live without having it at all, as *live without it*, after that I have lost it?

Or,

Or, why should I be *fond* of that, which for any thing I know, will *stick so fast* unto me when I have it, I shall be *weary* of it, before I can get *rid of it*? My *Understanding* is not *wide* enough, nor *clear* enough to discern *certainly* what is *best* for me; I am not sure I shall live to *acquire* what I have a mind to; if my Heart fix upon any thing here, I am not sure to *use* it; if I do lay my Hands on it, I do not know but that I may live till I am *surfeited* with it, so as to *loath* it more than ever I did *affect* and long for it: yea, I am not certain but that I may live to be *more without it*, than I am at *present*. To have it *ravish'd* from me, after I have *enjoyed* it, may increase and *exasperate* my sense of the *want* of it: A loss doth sometimes put so *keen an Edge* upon the Appetite, the *want* of a *continued or fresh* Enjoyment of the *Object*, makes the person wish with Indignation, and the most *painful trouble*, that he had never known what the *fruition* of it meant.

We read of some who are so very *peremptory* in their *Resolutions*, as if they thought themselves *Independent*, casting away the Thoughts of the uncertainty of their Lives, they resolve they will do
such

which such and such things, they will compass
 st un- such and such *Designs*, they will make
 ry of themselves *Masters* of this and the other
 under- thing, and they will *enjoy it too*. But
 or e- the Apostle teacheth us a better *Lesson* :
 for Lord grant that I may learn and practice
 quire it thoroughly, *viz.* to maintain in our
 fix Souls a constant powerful Sense of the *Ab-*
 use solute *Dependence* we have on God, and of
 not the *uncertainty* of our Lives, and to re-
 ted fer our Lives, our Purposes, and our En-
 r I deavours *entirely* to the *good Will* of our
 ot Sovereign Lord, Jam. 4. 13, 14, 15.

This is a Temper of Mind would teach
 us either to *abound*, or to *want*, as infinite
 Wisdom shall judge most fit to allot us our
Portion : It would secure us, that nei-
 ther *Plenty*, nor *Penury* should do us
hurt.

What signifie *profound Designs*, and
long-trained Purposes for this World, to
 one whose *Life* is *uncertain*, but to make
 him uneasy at present, and to torture
 him at last with sad Reflections on his
 lost Labours? for *when he dies*, all his
Thoughts will perish with him.

God's Allotment is the best Portion,
 and contentment with it the truest Hap-
 piness here. If we have Food and Rai-
 ment,

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ment, we have reason enough to be satisfied and thankful too. Lord! may I have my Conversation without Covetousness! Make me truly contented with such things as thou shalt dispence unto me! and help me to praise thee heartily, for thy taking away from me whatsoever thou shalt be pleased to deprive me of?

Secondly, *To be very sober and moderate in using the Things of this World when I have them, and to employ and lay them out presently to those good Ends and Services, for which they are given unto me.* Sensual, licentious People are strangely unaccountable in their Carriages, when they thrive and encrease, and (as they think) prosper in the World: They are nimble and quick in perverting every thing into a pretence for the humouring of their vicious, ungovernable Propensity and Inclination. Whatsoever comes into their Thoughts, though it carry the most expresse and glaring Contradiction to their last Plea, becomes an Argument with them, to justifie and spur them on to abuse what they enjoy, to the speedy Debauching of themselves and others; to make their Abundance minister to a present

sent Intemperance and Excess. If they happen to think of the uncertainty of their Lives, they abuse this to hasten their Debauch; they must eat and drink, *for to morrow they die.* If they reflect on their Plenty, the first Thought that occurs, or which they entertain, is to prompt and encourage them to continue and heighten their Intemperance: *Come ye, say they, I will fetch Wine, and we will fill our selves with strong drink, and to morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant,* Isai. 56. 12.

Some are of a quite contrary Temper; when they obtain wealth, estates, and lands, they place their Happiness in the very enjoying and encreasing of these Things; they do so hug these Things, they will not by any means be prevailed with, to part with any portion of them, for the Services of Piety and Charity, scarce for their own Conveniences, yea, some can hardly spare enough to provide themselves Necessaries: *They make Gold their Hope, and say to the fi. Gold, Thou art my Confidence.* By how much the more their Enjoyments encrease, by so much the more they are contracted and streightned in their own Spirits: They never know when they have

have enough; but though they are forced to stoop under the weight of what they have, they still drudge on industriously to the very end of their Lives, in labouring to encrease their Load.

This is certainly a *very ill depending* of an uncertain Life: It behoves us therefore to behave our selves more *agreeably* to the Dictates of Reason, to the Instructions of our *Holy Religion*, to what the *uncertainty* of our Lives should teach us. We are neither meerly to amass, and hoard up these Things for our selves, as *worldly-covetous Idolaters* do, nor to *lavish* and *embezzle* them upon our Lusts, as luxurious, voluptuous Spend-thrifts do.

We are to bless God, that he is pleased to provide so well for the easiness of our present Passage, and use what he bestows on us with such Moderation, that it may not strengthen and inflame our Lusts; may not disorder our Devotions; may not indispose us for the Duties of our Places; but may assist our doing the present Work God gives and appoints us to do, with greater cheerfulness and freedom.

The Apostle perswades Christians to demean themselves much after the same
man-

manner in the midst of their worldly Employments, they would apprehend themselves obliged to govern themselves, if they were without them; and this not only because of the *uncertainty* of these things strictly considered (as his Words barely considered in themselves, without relation to the occasion, of his uttering them, would import) but also because of the *uncertainty* of the time of their death, considering the apparent Dangers which did surround them, and the constant Reason they had to expect they should be sacrificed by the *cruel Persecutors* of their *most holy Faith*, 1 Cor. 7. 29, 30, 31.

Blessed be God, we are not at this time encompassed with such apparent Hazards, as those he spake of unto them were, in that present distress, yet our time of *Dying* is altogether as uncertain to us, as theirs was to them. Therefore such Moderation as they were advised to, may fitly enough be made the matter of our Care.

If we grow extravagant, if we be too indulgent to our Appetites and sensual Inclinations; if we transgress our Bounds, and fall into Intemperance and Excess, we are not sure, but our Souls may be summoned

moned away, before we have time to recover our selves: In what case shall we then be!

The Things of this World, when plentifully enjoyed, afford strong Temptations, which will be very apt to prevail over, and seduce us, if they be not strictly watched; and if they should prevail, they would do us very great damage: We shall be in much danger of growing unmindful of the *uncertainty* of our Lives; we shall be very much indisposed to die *comfortably*; we may have very much reason to doubt whether we shall die in a safe estate.

Our Blessed Saviour doth, from the Consideration of the *uncertainty* of our Time *here*, press and perswade us with great earnestness to guard our selves, and *take heed* of being overcome by the *Cares of this World*, or by those Pleasures and Excesses, in which People are prone to indulge themselves, when furnished with abundance of worldly Things. *Take heed to your selves, lest at any time your Hearts be over-charged with Surfeiting and Drunkenness, and Cares of this Life; and so that Day come upon you unawares,* Luke 21. 34.

Lord!

Lord! mercifully pardon all the Intemperance in eating and drinking I have been guilty of! Lay not to my charge my distrustful, distracting Cares, and solicitude about the Matters which only relate to Time; my giving too much way to the humouring and gratifying of my sensual Appetites and Propensions! Preserve me by thy powerful Grace from the same, or the like Inordinacies for the time to come: Help me to deny myself; and make me so regular and moderate in using *earthly Enjoyments* whilst I have them, that I may find very little want of them, if thou shalt see fit to cause me to live without them. May I constantly preserve in my self a firm and strong Perswasion, that the *Fashion of this World passeth away*. How much would it contribute to my Ease and Comfort, did I chuse *voluntarily*, whilst I have a liberal share of *worldly Enjoyments*, to be as abstinent and moderate in the use of them, as *necessity* doth oblige and force some to be! I should then *certainly* be in a Condition, to *minister* with more advantage to the Necessities of the *truly Indigent* and *Helpless*.

What

Whatsoever Abundance and Plenty I have at present, I may out-live the whole. Now why should I be such an Enemy to my self, as to enlarge my Desire, and make my Appetite either so voracious, or so nice, it cannot be pacified without an immoderate Quantity, or unless it be entertained with what is extremely delicate for quality? Why would I accustom my self to such Draughts, as will create in me a Thirst that will not be quenched or allay'd, but with what may be out of my reach, either for measure or kind?

Why should I, who may be just at home, entering into the clear and bright Regions, where I shall eternally feast on infinitely richer, and more pure, delicious Fare, burthen and gorge my self with these earthly Husks; Things too crude and nauseous for me to taste and relish any more?

If God doth liberally dispence the Things of this World to me, I must not look upon my self as a strict Proprietor and Owner of them, but as a Steward; I must consider these things as Talents committed to my Trust, for which I am to be accountable; and therefore I must
take

Take care to employ and lay them out at present, to those Ends and Uses for which God hath entrusted me with them, that at what time soever he shall please to call me to a reckoning, I may give up a good and comfortable account of my having disbursed them faithfully for his Service, and to the advantage and comfort of them, whose Patronage he doth peculiarly espouse.

I am very sensible, that this is a very tender point; I heartily mourn that many of whose happy Estate hereafter I cherish a good hope; do give so cold an entertainment to this most important and profitable Doctrine; do suffer this unworldly Tenent to have no more potent influence on their Conduct. I would commend this practice to all who are in a capacity of doing good; not because I envy them their Plenty, but because I hope I do as fervently desire their Advancement, to the highest Dignities in the heavenly Kingdom; as their most inveterate and implacable Enemies can desire their lowering here, and the diminution of their present Fortunes.

But some, perhaps, may be inclined to think, that a Reflection of this nature is very

very oddly introduced on this occasion; and that it is not duly inferr'd from the *uncertainty of our Lives*, or of the time when we shall die.

Seeing we do not know the time when we shall die, therefore we should make the most of what we have, be very choice of it, hoard it up, and secure it for our selves with all the care we can. Though I have so much at present, I scarce know what to do with it; yet I do not know but I may live long enough to make use of it all; I must therefore take heed how I part with any of it, lest I should live to want it. What greater Folly can there be, than to distribute that at present amongst the Poor, which I may have occasion of before I die, to preserve my self from wanting other People's Alms, as they do?

Peace, thou worldly, unbelieving Spirit; cease thy Clamours; augment not thy Distrust; strengthen not thy Disobedience, by multiplying such groundless, sordid, and impertinent Apologies.

Did God place me in this World only to mind my own things? Were the things of this World given me meerly for my

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own Use? Is it in my Power to fortifie
and fence my self with God's present
munificence, against his succeeding and
future Providence? Will his Liberality
do me now, justifie my Distrust of his
Kindness and Care for the time to come?

I cannot, with all my Care and Parsi-
mony, secure these Things to my self;
and if they either fly away from me of
their own accord, or are violently ra-
vish'd from me, I shall fail, and be dis-
appointed of my Aim; and I shall be un-
able to give a good account of the use I
made of what I had once at my own dis-
posal, and with which I might have made
real and everlasting Friends.

Besides, my time being very uncertain,
if I do not speedily lay out what I have,
to the Ends and Services of *Piety* and
Charity, I may die before I employ them
to the Purposes for which they were
committed unto me. What shall I then
answer, when questioned about the use I
put them unto? It will not serve my turn
then, to reply unto my Lord, I took
care not to embezzle thy Talent; I did
not spend it in the Tavern, in the Ale-
house, nor in the Stews; I did not squan-
der it away in Gaming, nor on Dogs,
and

and wasteful Diversions; I did not lay it out upon a luxurious Table, nor in maintaining a great Retinue of idle, loose, prophane, debauch'd Attendants. Would all who have great Estates, take care to preserve themselves clear, as to inordinate Expences these ways, they would not fall under the dreadful Guilt of a formal Serving with their Abundance, the Devil and wicked Lusts, the avowed open Enemies of that God, from whose Bounty they have receiv'd all the Wealth and Estates they do enjoy. It will not pass for a good Answer then to say, Lord, I laid up very choicely all thou didst commit to me; and here I return, *in specie*, what I received from thee. Or to say, I made such and such *Purchases* with thy *Talents*, which I took the best care I could, to appropriate to my own, and my Posterities proper use. *Then he which had one Talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard Man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed; and I was afraid, and went and hid thy Talent in the Earth: Lo, here thou hast that is thine. His Lord answered and said, Thou wicked and slothful*
Servant,

Servant, thou knowest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not sowed; Thou oughtest therefore to have put my Money to the Exchangers, and when at my coming, I should have received my own with usury: Take therefore the Talent from him, ——— And cast ye the unprofitable Servant into outer Darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth, Matth. 25. 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30.

Suppose you should serve your own Temporal Occasions with what you have, whilst you live here; and he who enjoys what you leave, shall employ them to worthy pious Purposes, (tho' it is not seldom that it falls out quite otherwise :) Then your Design will be quite frustrated. For it can hardly be conceived, that he who would not bestow any tolerable Portion of his Abundance of his Superfluities, to the Services of Religion, and Godliness, and Charity, did bequeath them to his Heir to distribute them in these ways. And tho' that person may give a comfortable Account of the good use he made of them, you will have no reason at all to hope that you shall fare the better, because another hath done that good with the things which were once at your disposal, which you had no mind to do with them. Why should you expect that anothers employing the Wealth and Estates which had been yours, to those good Uses, to which you would not expend them, should be imputed to your Comfort and Advantage? If your Successor do squander them away vainly and sinfully (as is very ordinary,) then you only treasure up what was committed to you, to lay out in commendable, good, and useful ways, for another to serve his Lusts and the Devil with them. If he bestow them well,

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your design is disappointed, and you reap no benefit from it: If he waste them viciously, how much your making Provision for the fulfilling of his Lusts, may heighten your Horrour, and increase your Torments, is more than I can conceive. If he tread in your steps, and makes it his business to preserve what you left, and to augment the Store for him that shall come after; you have set a bad Example, and where or how the Mischief will end, no Man can tell.

I do not deny, but it may be possible for an honest, pious, tho' imprudent Zeal, to prompt a Man to exceed his Bounds, in expending what he has of this Worlds Goods, in the Services of Religion and Goodness. But I do not perceive any danger of any Man's erring on that hand, in these days: And therefore I see not any occasion to insert a caution against that Extream.

People appear more prone by much in these Times, to venture their Consciences and Souls to aggrandize and make their Estates Bigger, than to sell them, and reduce themselves to Extremities, that they may supply the Necessities of the harassed and persecuted Members of our Common Saviour.

If such an instance should happen, how keenly soever his Indiscretion would be reflected on, by people of an earthly sordid Spirit, I know no reason we have to suspect; but many Allowances will be made for it: And that it will meet with a very favourable construction at the great Tribunal.

Instead of commenting therefore on that Text, viz. 1 Tim. 5. 8. to which people constantly have recourse on this occasion; I conceive it more pertinent to advise them to take heed, that they do

not

not wrest that Scripture to their own Destruction, as some have Scriptures of another nature to theirs.

If you die before you have laid out your Talents well, you will be at a lamentable loss how to make up your Account when you come to Judgment. Therefore, Give a Portion to seven, and also to eight, for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth. In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand, for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this, or that, or whether they both shall be alike Good, Eccles. 11. 3, 6.

Thirdly, To be ready to part with what things I have, freely and chearfully, at any time, when God shall see fit to call for them from me. How much would it contribute to my ease and Happiness Here? were I of such a Temper, I could be as Calm, and as Thankful, if God should remove all my Enjoyments, as I can be, when he doth heap and multiply them unto me. And when I consider matters sedately, I cannot produce one good Reason that should hinder me from Resigning, and yielding up all, very willingly to the most Righteous Owner, and Bountiful Bestower of them, when I have enjoyed them as long as he thinks expedient; especially when I call to mind, how uncertain I am of the Time when I must die. What great difference is there betwixt my voluntary parting with them in obedience unto God's Order, living contentedly without them a few days, and my possessing them a very little longer, to leave them then unavoidably, never to use, or reap any Benefit from them any more?

If it were possible for me to hinder their Flight from me, it may be impossible to continue my stay with them. And then, what great matter is it, which parts first?

O unbelieving *Distrustful Heart* ! When wilt thou have done objecting against, and discouraging me from my Duty ? Why dost thou now suggest, that I may live a great while, and that if I should, I shall have great and frequent occasion of these things, and cannot expect but to spend my time very uncomfortably, if I am without them ?

O the absurdity and unreasonableness of *Unbelief*, and of a *distrustful worldly Spirit* ! Can I keep and retain what God doth lend, whether he will or not ? Shall I be ever the *uneasier* some time hence, because I cheerfully yield up at present what God calls for ? And do not murmur, and rebelliously quarrel, and struggle, and fight, because God requires his own ? Will my troubling myself needlessly now, *sinning*, and behaving myself *indecently* and *undutifully* at present, prepare me to live comfortably without these things, when they are wrested from me against my will ? What *Nonsense* is all *Disobedience*, opposition to God, and *Replying against Duty*, *stuffed with* !

Have these worldly Enjoyments such an *Intrinsic Vertue* of their own, independently on God's concurrence ? they can answer my occasions, and make my Life easy and comfortable ? It is my mistaking the nature of these things, my over-esteeming of them, and not living in so absolute, full, and entire dependance on God as I should, that makes it so difficult to reconcile me to rejoyce and be thankful, when God takes any Enjoyments from me, as well as when he gives them to me, according to the most wise and good Counsel of his own will, which makes me so unwilling to part with them at any time, and so uneasy when they are

gone. They can of themselves do me no more service, when I have them, than when I am without them.

I shall need God's *kind and benign Influence*, as long as I live; but it is not absolutely necessary, that I must enjoy any of these worldly *Accommodations*, in order to my being easy, and passing my time comfortably even here. The most exquisite things of *Nature and Art*, can not afford me the least *Relief*, if God withhold his *Concurrence*. *Man liveth not by Bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, Matth. 4. 4.* The ease, the comfort, the refreshment, the pleasing sensation I perceive, when I make use of any of the things of this world, flow not from the things themselves. They are at most, but the *occasions* of them. The refreshment and comfort I receive, are wholly owing to a *Divine Vertue, and Power*.

Tho' God doth ordinarily impart his *Beneficent Influence* to us upon our using these things, and doth oblige us to make use of them for these Purposes, when he doth afford them to us, yet he hath not tyed himself to impart his refreshing exhilarating Influences no other way, than by these material gross Instruments.

If God will lengthen out my Life after he hath taken away those things from me, which are ordinarily reckoned the *Necessaries of Life*, he can impart the very same, or equivalent Expresses and Acts of his Favour and Kindness without them. And if he will do so, have I any need to be troubled, because I am excused from the trouble of making use of those things, which are but the conveniencies of a more imperfect State?

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If God shall see fit to put a period to my life, quickly after he withdraws the common Accommodations of a fading perishing Life, why should I be concerned, because I cannot retain any longer, or leave behind me those things, of which I shall have no further use?

The faster my Affections and Heart are glowed to these things, the more difficulty shall I leave them, when I cannot avoid it. Who can conceive the Agony I shall be in, the pain and torment I shall feel, when Death shall violently force, and tear, and rent me from the things, to which I cleaved so fast, and am so unwilling to part with!

My Christian Vow doth oblige me to part with all things cheerfully, when God requires them. The uncertainty of my Life should particularly reconcile and dispose me to do so. I have the Examples of those to excite me to do thus, who by their own Practice, have recommended it to me. Job said (when strangely, amazingly depriv'd of his extraordinary abundance and plenty,) *Naked came I out of my Mothers Womb, and naked shall I return thither; The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, Blessed be the Name of the Lord, Job 1. 21.* I read of those who took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves, that they had in Heaven a better, and an enduring Substance, Heb. 10. 34.

Lord, I have not any thing but what I have received from thy Bounty: I acknowledge I own my Being and all I enjoy unto thy Goodness. Thou hast an undeniable Right to dispose of the one and of the other, according to thy own pleasure. I am wholly beholden to thy free Mercy for all I have; and I confess thou mayst most righteously with-

withdraw all at what time soever thou shalt think meet : the property is entirely thine, tho' for a while thou art pleased to lend them to me for my use. I desire to admire thy wonderful Wisdom and Goodness, in that thou hast so admirably fitted these things to our present State ; and dost so constantly in the course of thy ordinary Providence, annex thy Blessing to them, for the making of them serve, and minister to our support and refreshment. Help me to use them regularly whilst thou dost continue them unto me, depending entirely on thee for thy Blessing with them ; for without that, they will at best be very insipid and useless. Preserve my Heart at all times so loose from them, that I may in a decent comely manner, resign them up, whensoever thou shalt be pleased to command them back from me.

MEDITATION VI.

That we should neither please our selves with thoughts of living a great while Here, nor trouble our selves with anxious thoughts about future Events in this World.

IF the Time of our Dying be most uncertain to us, then we can have no reason to set Death at a great Distance from us, nor to afflict our selves with *Anxious Cares* about *Future Events* in this World.

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First, *We have no reason to set Death at a great distance from us, or please our selves with thoughts of living a long time here.* What a *Grand Absurdity* is it, for me to reckon on Living to the end of this Week, or the next, and depend on my continuing so long in this World, when I am not certain that I shall not die this day? I may live some Weeks, or Months, or Years, for any thing I know to the contrary; but why should I reckon on living to any certain Period of time, when I am not sure but I may die in the mean time, and give up the Ghost before to morrow?

We may easily understand how many years are past, since we came into the World: And it may be of great use to reflect on them, and consider how we have behaved our selves; in what manner we have spent the time which we have already past. But when we look forward, we must not reckon of Life, in a way of peremptory conclusion, but of supposition, and so as to affect our Hearts with the Work we are to do, if God should be pleased to lengthen our Lives to such a Term.

If God shall think fit to continue my Life a Week, a Month, a Year longer, then I shall have so much time to employ my self in the Duties of Piety and Vertue, in such and such useful and profitable Exercises, which will contribute to my peace and comfort here, and through the abundant Riches of Divine Grace, to my greater Advancement, when it shall be the pleasure of God, that my Soul shall leave this World, and enter into its eternal State. *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our Hearts unto Wisdom, Psal. 90. 12.*

But

But alas ! how few do make such use of the Thoughts they entertain of their living a while longer ! People are very prone to please themselves with thoughts, that they shall wear out some Months, yea, some years more. But upon what accounts do they Buoy up themselves with these kind of Thoughts ? It is well if they do it not for Ends, which can by no means be justified, and upon grounds that are very trivial and feeble.

If you please your selves with Thoughts, that you shall live a great while longer, and pervert these Thoughts, to countenance your putting off your Preparation for Death from the present time, you are extreamly faulty, and cast your selves into very great danger. What advantage can you propose to your selves this way ? This (at best) will but make your Preparation more difficult, if not impossible. It will furnish Satan with a great Advantage to prevail with you to run that dismal Risque, of dying before you are prepared for a better State.

If you entertain these Thoughts, to justify or excuse your insisting on, and attending your formal Projects and Purposes about the Affairs of this present World, with a restless Industry, What doth all this amount unto, but only to divert your selves a while with empty hopes of what you may never obtain, or else to perplex and torture your selves with Cares and Fears about what may never happen ? Now, are these proper Employments for persons whose Lives are most uncertain ; for people who have no reasonable, no tollerable grounds to produce, why they should be confident of living to any parti-

cular Period they can assign? You have every jot as much reason to conclude peremptorily you shall die *this day*, as you have to be confident you shall live till the *next week*. Tho'l know no ground any Man has to be *peremptory either way*: For the precise time when he shall die is a Secret, he cannot in an ordinary way obtain the knowledge of. But God hath provided us very proper and useful business to exercise our selves about *as long as we live*, whether our Lives shall be of a shorter or longer *duration*. And this is certain, To lay out our present time in a diligent faithful attending to our proper work, would turn to a *better Account*, than adventuring to conclude & judge *decisively* in a matter to which we are altogether *Strangers*, or abusing the thoughts of a long Life, to countenance our being *too intent* upon those things which are of no great *importance* to them, whose Lives are very *uncertain*.

How extreamly *slight and trifling* are the most plausible, the very best *pretences* any can alledge, why they should persuade themselves, that they shall spend a considerable portion of Time more in this World?

You will say (it may be) you are *Young and Healthy*, of a *strong robust Constitution*, and why should you trouble your selves with *thoughts of Death*? You may live many a fair Year before you perceive the least *Symptom* of approaching *Death*, or of a declining and *Monitory State*.

But do you talk of being *troubled at the thoughts of Death*? Sure then it is high time for you to think of it to purpose, lest it should surprise you, and transmit you to *eternal Trouble*. You have reason to suspect you are not prepared for it;

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and then to cast off the thoughts of it, and to please your selves with the fancy of *long life*, is not the way to secure you from *Trouble*, but to make your Preparation abundantly more *Difficult* and *Troublesome*, if ever you do prepare for it.

Repent heartily of your Sins, reverence God, and behave your selves dutifully towards him; believe truly in the Lord Jesus Christ, and exercise your selves continually in well doing, and then you may *think of Death*, and look for it *too*, without trouble, yea with more than *manly Resolution and Comfort*.

You are *Young and Lusty*: But have not others who have had as much to say on those *Topicks* as you have, *suddenly expir'd*? Have not their Souls been snatched away much sooner than either they, or any body else expected? Why then should you depend on that which could not secure others under your *circumstances*, and who cherish'd the like *confidence* you do? Why should you rely on what hath failed so many?

Will you pretend, your *immediate Parents* and your *Ancestors* successively, have all lived to a very great *Age*, and that therefore you have reason to expect to live as long as they did?

Pray, *What is that to you*? Tho' you are descended from a long-liv'd Race of People, is there any necessary connexion between the time *they lived*, and the time *you must live*? Is God obliged to support and maintain you as long as he did your *Predecessors*? Or did they communicate to you a *Principle of Life*, that hath no dependance on the great Preserver and Governor of the Universe?

How long soever your Parents and Ancestors lived, they lived no longer than God was pleased

to uphold them in life; nor can you live any longer than he will please to maintain you: And how soon that time will be run out, you are altogether ignorant.

The Age of your Relations is no sure measure for you to judge of your own Lives by. Some whose Parents died as soon as they were born, have lived to see their Children, and their Grand-Children, and some of the next Generation too laid in the Earth. If you have not a particular *Patent* from Heaven for your living to a certain Period (which I suppose you will not pretend to,) It is certain, you have no more to depend upon for your reaching out your Lives to a great distance, in your own Thoughts and Imaginations, than others have had, whose *hopes* Death hath perfectly frustrated. You forget in whose hands your *Breath* is, when you presume to assign any particular measure for your Lives. *Boast not thyself of to morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth,* Prov. 27. 1.

Lord! thou hast protracted and lengthned out my Life very much beyond my expectation: many Years ago I was brought to the very brink of the Grave: All who saw me, thought that in a very little time, I should be *free* amongst the Dead. Thy right hand, O Lord, did hold me up; thy Gentleness and thy Benignity restor'd me to Health and Strength: I have been frequently Sick, and Uneasy; But thou, Lord of thy Goodness, hast rebuked my Distempers, and refreshed me. Thou hast considered my Frame, my Impotence and Weakness; tho' I have been often in pain, thy Visitations have been very favourable: When thou hast caused me to be
afflicted

afflicted, thou hast treated me with much Lenity ; my Pains have been very gentle and short, compared not only with what I have deserved, but with what others, much better than I, have endured, and groaned under a long time : The least of all my Pains and Illness, would have dissolved the Union betwixt my Soul and Body, if thou hadst not maintained me in Life. And how many millions of other ways this feeble Life might have been ended, I cannot tell, if thy most watchful tender Providence had not continually preserved me : *How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God ! How great is the sum of them ! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sands* Psal. 139. 17, 18. Several times have I lain down at night, as well and healthy to my own apprehension, as I have been in any part of my Life ; yet I have awak'd in Pain, and under much Indisposition. I have been confin'd either to my Bed, or to my Chamber for many Days or Weeks. *How frail a thing is Man ? Man in his best estate is altogether Vanity.* I am perpetually hastening towards the Grave ; How little a time shall this Soul sojourn here ? I know not Lord, how soon thou wilt command it hence : Let not me who am so evidently dying daily, dream of living long in this World ; make me at all times to mind with seriousness my great Change ; preserve me always in a posture meet to entertain with comfort, the Messenger thou shalt order to set my Soul at liberty : Help me continually to mind, and do with faithfulness the Work thou dost assign me, because the *Night will come*, and I know not how soon, when none shall be able to work.

Thine humble servant My
John

My unpreparedness to die, is that which makes me desire to live long in this World; and nothing more obstructs my preparation, than the thoughts of living a great while here: Were I but diligent in doing my *Masters Work*, the thoughts of staying long in this *imperfect state*, would be the greatest exercise and tryal of my Patience; then would the thoughts of *Death* be my repeated daily joy: This would on every occasion revive, exhilarate, and invigorate my weary, drooping fainting Soul. With what impatient, restless earnestness; with what expatiating and unbounded Fervour, should I then cry out, *Come Lord Jesus, come quickly!* O come, and call me to my *Masters Joy!*

Secondly, *We have no reason to perplex our selves with anxious Cares about future Events in this World.* A prudent wise Foresight is not disallowed; God and Christ, and their Ambassadors do not any where condemn or forbid it: They do commend and applaud it as a great Excellency. We are required to be wise as Serpents; and some are upbraided and reproached because of their *Stupidity* and *Incogitancy*, their want and neglect of *wise Observation*, so that they did not see and discern the *Face of the Times*.

It is the Property and Character of an understanding, good and pious Person, to see and look forward, and provide against what he has reason to believe very probable and likely to come to pass. *The wise Man's Eyes are in his head; He foreseeth the Evil, and hideth himself,* Prov. 22. 3.

Matters are many times in such a posture, a considering person cannot perceive any reason, why he should not expect very *Dismal Effects* to follow.

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In such cases, it is his Duty to use those honest lawful means the Providence of God doth furnish him with, to avoid them: He is to prepare himself for them, that if it be not the pleasure of God he shall escape them, he may bear them with *Equanimity and evenness of Spirit*; may be disposed to entertain them with such *submission and dutifulness*, as will put him into a condition to get good by the keenest *Dispensations* he can be exercised with.

But we are very faulty, and do wander extravagantly beyond our *Compass*, when we suffer our *Fancies and Imaginations* to be without *Government*, and to create to us *supposititious Affrightments*, for which we have no *particular Foundation*; and concerning which we can say no more, but that they are possible, and therefore do perplex and disquiet our selves with these *Fictions* of our own.

If we have just reason to suspect, that in all probability very terrible *Events* will happen in a little time; we must not adventure to commit any Sin, omit any indispensable present Duty, or use any unwarrantable methods to secure our selves from those *menacing Effects*: for thereby we expose our selves to *greater Evils*.

We must not be too positive in such Cases, that what we suspect will unavoidably come to pass, or that we shall live to see their *Terror*, or feel their *Smart*; or that if we shall live so long, they will exactly make the same Impressions on us, our *Apprehensions* do at present represent.

It can no way become us, on such occasions, to limit or prescribe to God, to distrust his Power,

Power, Faithfulness and Goodness. If we suffer our Minds to continue under *Distraction*, if we do so torture and vex our selves with thoughts of what may happen, as to render us unmeet for, and take us off from a serious, faithful attending to what God makes our Duty at present, we are worthy of much blame.

When our Suspicions and Conjectures, and most reasonable Expectations of what is likely to prove afflicting, do thus *transport* us, our Carriage is far from being such as suits with that Deference we owe to the *Almighty, most Wise, and Infinitely Good God*. Our Behaviour doth not become the *Station* in which God hath placed us, nor that *Dependance* we have on him. We do not demean our selves as God directs us, in the midst of all those Changes, Varieties, and Alterations of Providence, with which he in his infinite Wisdom sees fit we should be treated.

It will much better become us to be meek and quiet, to encourage and strengthen our selves in the Lord our God, to exert Faith and Confidence in him more strenuously, to follow our proper business more diligently, to pray more fervently, to fly for Refuge under the shadow of the Almighty, to get our Hearts and Consciences more thoroughly cleansed from all Pollution, to improve in the acting of every Grace, to excite our Hope and Love with greater Efficacy, to possess our Souls with Patience, to abound in doing all the good we can in the mean time, to submit more freely to Gods most Righteous Pleasure and blessed Will, and to wait with greater assurance for the accomplishment.

complishment of that extraordinary Good he will effect and bring to pass, or make way for, by such tremendous and startling Dispensations. Let your Conversation be without Covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee, Heb. 13. 5. Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by Prayer and Supplication with Thanksgiving, let your Requests be made known unto God. And the Peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your Hearts and Minds through Christ Jesus, Phil. 4. 6, 7. Although the Fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall Fruit be in the Vines, the labour of the Olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the Flock shall be cut off from the Fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoyce in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my Salvation, Habak. 3. 17, 18. Yea, tho' I walk through the Valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no Evil, for thou art with me, thy Rod and thy Staff they comfort me, Psal. 23. 4. What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee, Psal. 56. 3. Thou O Lord, art the faithful and true God; I know thou wilt perform thy promises to them who love, and serve, and fixedly depend on thee: For the Lord God is a Sun and Shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of Hosts, blessed is the Man that trusteth in thee, Isal. 84. 11, 12. Thou, Lord, knowest how to bring about most desirable, good, comfortable and glorious Events, by these most cloudy, dark, and frightful Appearances: Thou wilt effect thy own most excellent Counsels; and thou wilt make these amazing Occurrences to serve

serve in a most admirable manner to thy own glory; and to contribute more than we can be aware of, to the advantage, comfort, and joy of those who love thee, and do make thee their Confidence. *We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose, Rom. 8. 28. Why art thou cast down O my Soul! and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my Countenance, and my God, Psal. 42. 11.*

We are not sure of any time but the present; and at present God provides us such Work as will afford us abundant Comfort, if we take a due care to execute and perform it aright. How unfit, how unreasonable then is it, for us to torment our selves about Futurities? Can any thing be more unreasonable, than our laying aside the Work God hath assigned us, which is the most meet and useful and good Work that can be devised, merely to attract and draw future Troubles into the present Time? Are we so impatient to converse with what is formidable, that we cannot stay its proper Season? Must we needs hasten it before its time, and thereby (peradventure) make it much more terrible than it will be when it comes?

Does it become us to be so displeased with God's Benificence and Bounty to us, that because he makes not the Burthen of the present Time more troublesome, therefore he will make it heavier, by adding to it, the overwhelming weight of unseasonable Calamities?

Our Benefit and Comfort would be much ad-

own advanced, did we carefully observe our Blessed
 an be Saviour's Advice, which he enforceth with a
 d joy very pertinent and rational; Reflection: Take
 thee therefore no thought for the morrow, for the mor-
 row shall take thought for the things of it self,
 then sufficient unto the day, is the evil thereof, Matth.
 8. 28. 6. 34. Let us mind our own business, and leave
 y art God to govern the World, and dispose of Futu-
 s for rities as shall seem best to him, who never did,
 my nor ever will do any thing amiss or out of or-
 der. Let us fulfill what he enjoyns us at pre-
 pre- sent, and quietly refer the further concerns of
 such Church and State, of Nations and Countries,
 if of Families, of Relations, and of our own Per-
 sons, to that God whose Wisdom cannot err, and
 when whose Goodness is not to be stinted.

Indeed it is of great use to us, to represent
 often to our selves, calamitous Occurrences in
 their most live'y, affecting, penetrating Consi-
 derations and Circumstances, to heighten our
 Faith and Hope, and Trust in God, and to pre-
 pare our selves for the worst that may happen,
 if God shall see fit to lengthen out our Lives
 to till he shall actually bring such things to pass.

But we must not pervert this, to distract
 and divide our Spirits, to strengthen and in-
 crease our Diffidence, to take us off, and make
 us unmeet for the Work God hath given us
 to do at present.

I am (perhaps) as prone as most persons to
 suspect, that some very amazing and dreadful
 Events will happen to this Land, and it may
 be to all the Protestant Countries. May a spee-
 dy universal Reformation of our Hearts and
 Manners; may a temper of Spirit, and a course
 of

of Practice *every way* answerable to that most pure, peaceable, friendly, and holy Religion we profess, every where prevail and discover themselves with greater strength, to the daily weakening and lessening of such Fears.

Now if I coulp warrant this Suspicion, I can no way justify my Distrust of God, nor my suffering my self to be hereby utterly *indisposed* for, or *diverted* from the Duties and Business God hath imposed on me at present, and antecedent y to his visiting us with such Allotments of his *Providence*.

If such Events shall certainly happen, I am not sure that I shall live 'till they come; I may be out of their way long enough before they happen; I am not certain what Effect they will have on me, if I live to see them. If I be *well prepared to die*, why should I be concerned whether I give up the Ghost in a serene, calm Air, or in the midst of a furious, tempestuous Hurricane, any more than whether I shall die by a scorching, violent Fever, in a strong *convulsive Paroxysm*, or by a lingering, soft Consumption?

If God shall think fit to hide me under the Covert of his Wings, and cause me to out-live the dreadful Storm (which, it may be, will not continue long) with what ecstasie of Joy shall I behold the happy dawning of that glorious Day he will bestow upon his *Church*, when he hath poured out his Vengeance on his irreclamable *Adversaries*, and hath removed his obstinate Enemies out of the way! when he will *revive* Religion and Piety in their Truth and Power, and hath scoured away the Dross which cleaves to them he designs shall see the accomplishing of those great and precious Promises, he hath certified shall be fulfilled in the latter Days!

When

When we reflect upon our selves, when we look round about, what a dismal Prospect presents it self unto us! Our Wickednesses are most heinous for their Nature; their Number doth exceed all computation, and they are all most horribly aggravated. When we turn our *Thoughts* that way, from whence our Hopes should *spring*, Affrightment seizeth on us, our Horror multiplies. What can be more *deplorable*, what may so justly excite *despairing Fears*, as, that the best Religion which was ever taught, should amount amongst us to little more than an *empty Name*, or a few floating *wordy Notions*? What Fruits do we bring forth under the most laudable Profession, and the best external Advantages, a People can be *favoured* with, but *bitter Envyings, uncharitable rash Censures, peevish unchristian Animosities*? We have wretchedly abused Divine Patience: Chastisements have but made us fret and mutiny: When delivered, we murmur; then grow wanton and untractable. We turn Mercies and Favours into fuel to enflame our Lusts and Passions: Our Plenty, our Peace, our Safety, our Liberty, do strengthen our Divisions, heighten our old Rancour, give birth to new Quarrels and Contentions, lessen our Piety, increase our Distances, add Implacableness to our Enmities, and scarce leave with us so much as the outward shew and appearance of good Nature. Now what may we expect the end of these things will be?

We must acknowledge, O Lord, thou hast not dealt with us after our Sins, nor rewarded us according to our Iniquities.

What method, Lord, thou wilt further take with us, I cannot tell: But how shall such a
People

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People be recovered and bettered, unless thou, Lord, be pleased to grant an extraordinary Effusion of thy Ho'y Spirit! Or to awaken, prepare, and dispose us to be of better Minds than we be at present, by some very terrible and amazing Dispensations.

Lord, if thou shouldst proceed to do thy marvellous and thy strange Work amongst us, to inflict such desolating Calamities and Judgments on us, as will make the Ears of all who shall hear the report of them, to tingle; thou must be acknowledged to be Just, and Righteous, and Holy. Though Clouds and thick Darkness are round about thee, yet Righteousness and Judgment are the Habitation of thy Throne. O that thou wouldst yet save us by thy Almighty Arm and Goodness! Save thy People, O Lord, and give not thy Heritage to reproach: Why should thy idolatrous Enemies rule over us? Wherefore should those who have made themselves drunk with the Blood of thy Saints, say among thy People, *Where is your God?* Why shouldst thou suffer us to become a Prey to one another? O that the true Spirit of thy holy Religion might now at last prevail in us all. Let not our *Divisions*, our *Animosities*, our *Lusts* and *Passions* betray us unto each others Spight and Unmercifulness: Be jealous for thy Land, and pity thy People. Yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy Name; leave us not. We acknowledge, O Lord, our Wickedness and Iniquities of our Fathers; for we have sinned against thee. Do not abhor us, for thy Name's sake: Do not disgrace the Throne of thy Glory; remember, break not thy Covenant with us. If thou wilt visit our

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Transgressions with the Rod, and our Iniquities with Stripes, yet take not thy *Loving-kindness* utterly away from us, suffer not thy Faithfulness to fail.

In what way soever thou shalt be pleased to deal with us, I am sure thou wilt maintain thy own Cause, and the Right of thy People: The Gates of Hell shall not *prevail* against thy Church: Thy Son's Interest and Kingdom shall not be *overthrown*; they shall *prevail* and *grow*. The glorious King of Saints, he whom thou hast made Head *over all Things* to his Church, will most assuredly triumph *over all his Enemies*: When they are got to the highest point of Pride and Insolence, he will break them with a Rod of Iron, he will dash them in pieces as a Potter's Vessel. What Light and Order, what Harmony and Beauty, what Truth and Holiness, what Concord and Love, would he bring forth, out of all that Darkness and Confusion, which the Sins of those who profess his sacred Religion, are pulling down upon the Places where his holy Gospel hath been long enjoyed!

O Lord, I know thou art not unmindful of them who love and serve thee in sincerity: Thou knowest how to deliver the Godly out of Temptation. As the Heavens are high *above* the Earth, so *great* is thy Mercy towards them that fear thee. Like as a Father pitieth his Children, so thou, O Lord, dost pity them that fear thee.

Cause me, O Lord, to mourn after a godly sort, for my own and the Publick Guilt: Let me sigh and cry for all the Abominations which are committed. May I heartily seek, and effectually obtain Reconciliation with thy self, O thou most holy
and

and Almighty God, through the prevailing Merits and Mediation of Him, whom thou hast given to be the Propitiation for our Sins. O that my Faith and Love may increase and abound, in proportion to the Abominations which do provoke thy Anger: Help me entirely to refer my self to thy most Wise and Good Disposal: Allot me what thou pleasest here, only be thou my Guide, my Portion, my exceeding great Reward; and let the Fruition of thy self in Heaven be my Inheritance for ever.

Be merciful unto me, O God; be merciful unto me; for my Soul trusteth in thee; yea, in the shadow of thy Wings will I make my Refuge, until these Calamities be over-past. I will cry unto God most High, unto God that performeth all things for me. He shall send from Heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth his Mercy and his Truth, Psal. 57. 1, 2, 3.

I will love thee, O Lord my Strength: The Lord is my Rock, and my Fortrefs, and my Deliverer; my God, my Strength, in whom I will trust; my Buckler and the Horn of my Salvation; and my high Tower, Psal. 18. 1, 2.

Lord, strengthen my Faith; deliver and free me from all Diffidence and Distrustfulness of thee, Beget and maintain in me a steady, firm, unshaken Trust and Confidence in thy Power, Faithfulness, and Goodness. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will we not fear tho' the Earth be removed, and though the Mountains be carried into the midst of the Sea; though the Waters thereof roar, and be troubled; though the Mountains shake with the swelling thereof, Psal. 46. 1, 2, 3. Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the Heathen;

then; I will be exalted in the Earth. The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our Refuge, Vers. 10, 11.

All thy Paths, O Lord, are Mercy and Truth unto such as keep thy Covenant, and thy Testimonies: Let Integrity and Uprightness preserve me, for I wait on thee: Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his Troubles. As for me, I will walk in my Integrity; redeem me, and be merciful unto me. The Lord is my Light, and my Salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the Strength of my Life, of whom shall I be afraid? Psal. 27. 1.

MEDITATION VII.

*That it will not be long fore we shall die:
Some practical Reflections. The present
Life is the only time wherein we can pre-
pare for everlasting Blessedness.*

WE cannot certainly know the exact time when we must die; but may be certain it will not be long before we shall die. It will be but little while, if Death do not prevent our Travel, and put an end in the mean time to our Journey, before we arrive at that number of Years, beyond which Men do not ordinarily proceed.

Indeed, in the First Ages of the World, Men's Lives were extended to a huge length, comparing them with the longest Period allotted to human Life now: Yet no Man did then attain to live over a thousand Years; which space doth not are the

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same proportion to Eternity, that an Hour, or Minute, doth with it : For Minutes may be, and have been multiplied to a thousand Years ; but that number of Years cannot, by multiplying reach to Eternity. When we can reckon no farther, could Numbers be exhausted, we are as far from understanding the Measure of Eternity as we were at the very beginning of our Account.

A vast number of Generations have past away since the inspired Pen-man gave notice, that God had determined to contract and shorten the term of Man's Life to that degree, that none must expect to live so many Scores of Years, as some of the first Inhabitants of this World did Hundreds. *The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore Years, yet is the Strength, Labour, and Sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away, Psal. 19. 10.*

All Ages from that time, have witnessed very faithfully to, and confirmed this Truth, that six or seventy Years is a Term and Period of Time, which Men's Lives do not ordinarily exceed ; and our own Observation may convince us, that we have no reason to expect, that our Lives shall the utmost be protracted beyond that Term. Amongst the numberless Multitudes which do every year die, how diminutive and inconsiderable is the number of those, who have crept over sixty or seventy Years, when compared with those who have not lived out half that Age?

I have all imaginable reason to conclude I shall die in a little time, though my Life should be stretched out to that Period, beyond which Men do not ordinarily live : And frequent Distempers

and Indispositions admonish me to look for Death much sooner. O stupid, blockish Wretch! who makes no better use of such loud and pertinent Instructions. The greatest part of my Time is already spent; but, alas! how little have I minded that Work with which the Years that are past should have been filled! How justly do I blush! with what confusion am I covered, when I consider, that others have *served* God, and their Generations, to better purpose in one Hour, than I have done in forty Years! I have turned the vertical Point, I am evidently declining, I am running down the Hill, and God only knows how soon I shall be at the bottom. I am sure it will not be long before this Soul will fly into the other World; and this Body will be fit for nothing, but to be laid in the Grave, and to be covered with Earth and Rubbish. How careful should I be to redeem, and make the best use that is possible of that little Time which yet remains! Lord, mightily enable me to give all diligence to make my Calling and Election sure; to work out my Salvation with fear and trembling; let me live the rest of my Time to the Will of God, to the pleasing of my dear and only Saviour, who died for me, and rose again. O that I may truly say for the time to come, as St. Paul did, *I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the Life which I now live in the Flesh, I live by the Faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me, Gal. 2. 20.*

Our Lives are as meer nothing, when compared with Eternity: They are *very short*, if compared with the duration of this visible System we call the World; the Stage on which a great many Scenes

are acted, wherein we are no way at all concerned, on which we are to act but a very small part, just appear, and take one turn, and so withdraw. They are short, compared with the Lives of those who first inhabited this Earth; yea, they are short, comparing them with the continuance of some other sorts of Creatures.

But yet as short as our Lives be, they are long enough for many excellent Purposes, if we had Hearts and Grace to employ them as we ought. Were we not very faulty our selves, we might accomplish many laudable, useful Enterprises. We may finish the Work God hath given us to do whilst we are here, would we lay out our short time as we ought, and make the best use of those Advantages which are afforded us, to compass worthy, honourable, and profitable Designs.

As long as we continue here, we are exposed to innumerable Calamities and Disasters; for *Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward.* And therefore we have reason to be very well pleased, that our Lives here are of no longer continuance; and to give God hearty thanks, that he hath made the time of our Trial so short, and that he doth oblige us to stay no longer in a state, where so many things do continually conspire to disturb and make us uneasy. Certainly it behoves us to take great care that we behave our selves so, during these short Lives, that when they end, we exchange not temporary Troubles and Calamities, for Plagues and Curses, which will infinitely more torment people, and that without interruption, and to all eternity.

Seeing it will not be long before these Souls will enter into their eternal estate, and these Bodies must lie down in the dust, it will become us to quit our selves like Men, and behave our selves commendably,

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commendably, during the little time we are to live here. Do we not continually see, that those who leave us behind them in this World, lived but to declare their Errand, which was to tell us we must live but a little while here? And when we are dead, what will our Lives amount to more, than a rehearsing of the same Message to them who shall survive us, viz. That in a little time they must die, as we have before them, and continue the same Admonition, and inculcate on Posterity the very same Lesson, others Lives were to teach us, and ours were to instruct them in?

The sacred Scriptures speak of human Life, in such a lessening and disparaging strain, as must needs beget in us a very affecting sense of the shortness of our Lives, if we do diligently attend to, and seriously consider the descriptions and account they give of this: *What is your life?* It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away, Jam. 4. 14. *Man that is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble; he cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he flieth also as a shadow, and continueth not,* Job 14. 1, 2. *Man is like to vanity; his days are as a shadow that passeth away,* Psal. 144. 4. *As for Man, his days are as grass, as a flower of the field so he flourisheth; for the wind passeth over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more,* Psal. 103. 15, 16. *Behold thou hast made my days as an handbreadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee; verily every Man at his best estate is altogether vanity. Surely every Man walketh in a vain shew; surely they are disquieted in vain; he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them,* Psal. 39. 5, 6. *My days are like a shadow that declineth, and I am withered like grass,* Psal. 102. 11. *My days are swifter than a Weaver's shuttle, Job 7. 6. They are swifter than a post; they flee*
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away: they are passed away as the swift Ships, as the Eagle that hasteth to the prey, Job 9. 25, 26. When we read, or hear, or call to mind these, or any such Expressions relating to Humane Life, it will be very proper for us to lay them to our hearts, and endeavour to get our selves duly affected with the short stay we are to make in this World, and to consider what use we should make of this most certain Truth, That we shall continue on Earth but a little while, and that it will not be long before our Souls will be irreversibly determined to a never ending Happiness or Misery.

First, *With what consideration and acurateness should we behave our selves during the little time we shall live here?* Seeing it will not be long before we must enter into Eternity, there cannot be any thing more obvious to our Reason than this, That it is our interest as well as duty, so to adjust all the portions of Time that are at our disposal, that they may contribute to the certainty and solemnity of our Happiness and Joy in the Future State. Eternal Misery or eternal Happiness will be assigned to us, according as we expend this short life, in good or evil Exercises. Those things therefore which are true, and honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report, which are vertuous, and honourable, of certain use, commendable, and worthy of praise, should employ our Thoughts, and be our Business. These are the Matters amongst which we ought to divide our Time, which is hastning us to, and will soon lodge us in Eternity. If we be diligent and regular in bestowing our Time about these things, we shall be able to justify our selves to our own Reason and Consciences, which will entertain us with inestimable Peace and Satisfaction at present,

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we shall be sure to be approved of that God, who is pleased only with Holiness and Righteousness; an abundant Entrance will be administered to us, as soon as this short life shall end, into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

There is not any thing so incongruous, not any thing more unaccountable, than for Men who know their lives cannot last long, to be prodigal of their Time, and to squander it away idly, impertinently, and sinfully. To know they are making speed to Eternity, and not concern themselves to avoid everlasting Torments, but to be industrious to treasure up for themselves unsupportable Remorse, Horror and Confusion, which will never leave them.

People often talk of a *Short Life, and a merry one*. But they manifestly appear to speak what they do not understand. All our Lives are short, and no Man's Life is truly pleasant, but his who is unfeignedly Religious. What multitudes call *Mirth* according to the truest determination of the wisest of meer Men, is no better than *Folly and Madness*: And should a mad Life be long, it would be an intolerable Burthen to it self, and for an Execration to all the World.

Our Time is given us for Work and Service; it hath a relation to Eternity, and it will be our wisdom to make a good use of it, and to exercise our selves in every part of it, as much as we can, about those Matters which will turn to a comfortable Account hereafter.

We have no occasion to throw any of our Time away. We should be very choice of it; for it passeth away with such swiftness, our Imaginations cannot keep pace with it: Our quickest Thoughts cannot follow one after another so fast,

as one part of our Time doth succeed another. Our Life is constantly wasting; we are always posting to Eternity, whether we think thereof or no. We neither think, speak, move, nor act, neither sleep nor wake, but we are something nearer that *Minute*, when our Souls will take their flight into the unseen World. When any particle of our Time is past, there is no possibility of retrieving, and calling it back again. Our Time passeth on, and no Art can put any check or stop to its rapid motion.

He that doth ill, doth doubly lose his time: He not only wastes that portion of his Life which is spent in the Fact, but if ever he become wise, he must lay out another part of his life in repenting of, and undoing what he hath done amiss, which might have been employed much better, if he had not unhappily brought himself under a necessity of correcting his former Practice.

If I had set a just value on the Time I have past, & had faithfully laid it out in performing all those Duties God did assign for it, what a delightful, amiable prospect would have occurred to me, on my looking back, and surveying that part of my Life which is now over? With what satisfaction might I look forward to the happiness of the next World! With what joy should I wait for the time of my Redemption, and the Glories which shall succeed the Resurrection of the Just? With what Indignation do I reflect upon my self, when I consider the precious Time I have mispent in searching after gratifications my Reason cannot justify, which the best Religion doth severely censure and condemn. Lord! I abhor my self before thee, because of my having imbezzelled so inestimable a Talent: I humbly beg thy most merciful pardon.

I earnestly implore with all my Soul, the guidance and assistance of thy Holy Spirit for the time to come, to direct and enable me to live the rest of my time according to thy most sacred Will. May I wisely redeem, and make the best improvement of all the seasons and opportunities thou wilt intrust me with, for any pious and good purposes: Help me by thy grace, most merciful and Almighty Saviour, to pass the time of my Sojourning here, in thy Fear, and Love, and Service; make me to follow thy Conduct, and to serve thee in Holiness and Righteousness, with all Integrity and Faithfulness, all the remaining days of my Life.

Secondly, *What a satisfactory Answer is the shortness of our Life, to every thing that can be alledged, to discourage us from such a course of life, as the Gospel of Christ doth appoint?* For seeing the consequences of a truly religious and good Life, will be most glorious and eternal, of how little weight must all those Objections be, which bear no proportion with them, either on the account of their Nature or Continuance?

Our Souls have received in the first place a false Byass, from which they are not perfectly freed as long as they continue in these earthly Tabernacles, which will wrestle and strive against that Divine Principle which is of a latter Date. That corrupt Principle which still remains in the truly Regenerate, tho' in a weaker degree than formerly, is by sensible Impressions, and the Artifices of Satan continually irritated and prompted to exert it self, and make new attempts to gain its antient Dominion, and to obstruct and hinder the spiritual Principle all it can in its Exercises. This will be our State in a great measure, as long as we are here: And therefore we must expect much opposition in our attending

tending to that Work which God hath given us to do, whilst we are in this world. For this reason we ought to be very earnest, diligent, and constant in following the Divine Conduct; and it is no small encouragement we have to do so, which ariseth from this consideration, That our Combate will not last always. In a little time our Warfare will be at an end; it will last no longer than we live here; it will not be long before our Souls must leave these Bodies, and then our fight will be at an end. Let us behave our selves as good Soldiers of Jesus Christ, and we shall soon through his victorious Conduct and Influence, attain to be more than Conquerors. All our toil, labour, weariness and trouble, will quickly have a full period put unto them, and expire into Pomp and Triumph.

• The Rage of Satan, and the wickedness of men, who are not partakers of the Divine Nature, are such, our governing our selves faithfully, as the holy Jesus doth order, may expose us to many troubles and sufferings in this world: But then, the hatred, and malice, and fury of our Enemies will not last long, at least we shall not be long within their reach. We have but a little time to live on Earth, and our Enemies cannot pursue us when we are gone hence: Their venom and spight will not make any Impression on us, when our Souls are received into the Bosom and Embraces of the Holy Jesus, who reigns in eternal Glory. How little and inconsiderable are the Oppositions and Sufferings we may be exposed to during a short life, when compared with eternal Happiness, when we are so well assured that these short Sufferings, being patiently endured, and well improved for a little time, will unconceivably heighten our Felicity, and add a most dazling brightness to our Crown? *I reckon that*

that the Sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which shall be revealed in us, Rom. 8. 18. For our light Affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory, 2 Cor. 4. 17.

A Gospel Conversation is not likely, especially in a degenerate Age, to make a man a Possessor of any of the great things of this world. It is not the way to Preferments, to Honours, to large Revenues upon Earth; yet it is the sure and only way to Heaven, and to the highest Dignities and Preferments in the Kingdom above: And he that doth in good earnest addict himself to this sort of Life, can very well, and with abundance of ease and comfort, pass through this world without having the great matters of the world. He finds no want of a great many things, others think they can by no means be without. A little of the world will serve that man's turn very well, who looks not for Happiness till he gets to Heaven.

What signifies a great deal of this world, to one who knows he must not use much of it himself, and who is sure he cannot stay long to enjoy the things of the world, if he had a mind to make Experiments, and try what Diversion they can afford him? He that hath his Treasure in heaven, will rather choose to take Solomon's word for the Vanity, and vexation of Spirit, which are the only Fruits that spring from having and making a sensual, or curious use of worldly abundance, than be at the trouble to obtain a personal Conviction by following his Example.

I cannot imagine any content and satisfaction a truly religious good Person can take, in being advanced to an honourable Post, or in having great quantities of Wealth, and large Revenues, further than

as he is thereby put into a capacity to do much Good, and hath opportunities to unload himself, by dispensing the good things of this world liberally, and bestowing his abundance and plenty with an open bountiful hand amongst others, to very worthy, pious, and charitable uses.

When persons who pretend to have a religious sense of matters, and to be satisfied that they can live but a little while in this world, are continually scraping together earthly Enjoyments, loading themselves with thick Clay, hoarding up Money, and multiplying Houses and Fields for those who shall come after them, when they are not certain who they shall be, nor what use they will make of that superfluous abundance they design to leave behind them; tho' they may lay out the greatest part of what they have already, with the greatest assurance, to most worthy and profitable Purposes, they do most evidently involve themselves in as monstrous an Absurdity as can be conceived. They contract upon themselves a Blemish and Disgrace that is indelible: They bring themselves under so heinous a guilt, that if it be not absolutely irremissible, it must (when Charity hath been extended to its utmost reach) be deemed next to unpardonable. I do not know how their course can be excused from an Imputation, which cannot be justly fixed either on a good, or a prudent Man, and which deserves a worse and more ignominious Name than either Folly or Madness; it is such a comprehensive bulky Crime, we are not furnished with a Term that can fully express either its Baseness or Mischievousness. Should we attempt to assign it a proper Denomination, it might be justly reputed an abuse of Language, to call it any thing less than the *Malignity and Venom of Wickedness*, rigidly considered.

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Let me rather beg my Bread as long as I live, yea die with hunger, than make this World my God, or have my Soul tainted with that love, which will make me the Enemy of God: How willing should I be, to be without all outward Accommodations a little while, if that be the pleasure of my most wise and good God? If God of his Bounty do throw in more of these things unto me than my modest occasions require, how delightfully should I serve my Generation with them, according to his most blessed Will, rather than bequeath them, when I can grasp and hold them no longer, to be employed to I know not what Uses?

May the wild and unsatisfied engrossers of Tene-ments, Farms and Mannors, attain to solid Wisdom; consult their truest Profit, and improve the consideration of the shortness of their Lives, to their most lasting Advantage. O that they would cease from their ravenous Pursuits, and imitate the truly Penitent and Noble *Zacheus*! *Give half their goods to the Poor*, and make a plenary and abounding Restitution to those they have any way wronged, *Luke* 19. 8. Would the Rich and Wealthy settle (in as firm and unalterable a manner as is within their reach) some considerable part of their Purchases, to be lasting Monuments of a pious, sincere Charity, a certain Fund for the perpetuating of a religious Education of Youth, and supplying the Necessities of the truly Indigent and Distressed, they might take abundant comfort in, and would draw down the surest Blessing upon the Remainder of their Estates: Then they would take the most infallible method to leave a happy and lasting Inheritance to those who should derive from them: Those who through the Blessing of God upon their honest diligence in lawful Employments, do thrive
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in the world, and do much good with what they gain, and becoming very rich (for true Charity I take to be the surest way to increase; *The liberal Soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself*, Prov. 11. 25. *The liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand*, Isa. 32. 8.) doth settle considerable Maintainances for pious Uses to succeeding Generations, tho' they transmit not such *overgrown Luxuriant Fortunes* to their Off-spring, as some who take worse courses may leave to theirs for a little while, yet they do undoubtedly make the happiest provision for themselves. No sooner will they die, but with great Solemnity they will be introduced into the Mansions of Peace and Glory, and will be in eternal Honour and Renown amongst Myriads of glorious Angels and Saints: Their Memory will be precious, their Names will be for a Blessing from Generation to Generation upon Earth. And how many Blessings their doing thus, will draw down on their Families, on all they leave behind them, no humane Understanding can comprehend. Whereas covetous, greedy Worldlings, will be condemned to the extreamest Disgrace as well as Torment, that shall be known in the dismal Regions of Blackness and Confusion; their Names will rot sooner than their loathsome Carcasses; or else their Memories will be preserved meerly to be a lasting Abhorrence and Execration; the Curses they bequeath are more numerous, and more weighty, than the pieces of Money and Lands they leave unto their Heirs: What horrid nonsense is it, that men should spend their short Lives, to make what they do obtain execrable and of short continuance? He that doth conscientiously employ his short Life in the best, most publick, and enduring Services he can, provides

provides for a Happiness that is next to being two ways eternal. He secures to himself a perfectly eternal Happiness in the next World, and to his Posterity the longest Prosperity that can be inherited in this World. Had rich and wealthy Men but so much Faith as to make the trial, I do not doubt but experience would fully and undeniably confirm the truth of what I shall immediately affirm, *viz.* That one Farm out of three or four, devoted by unfeigned Love to God and Men, to truly charitab^{le} Uses, would give a firmer establishment to the other, than can be given them by the most accurate Settlement, the most cunning Lawyer in the World can draw. Can any Man employ a short Life to better Purposes, than to secure to himself everlasting Happiness, and provide that both his own Posterity, and a great many more, shall successively rejoice in the good and comfortable Effects of his Piety, when he himself doth inherit its most peculiar Recompences?

Lord, pour forth abundant measures of the Spirit of true Charity, upon those who have Wealth and Riches, that they approving themselves really good Persons, there may be great Joy both in Heaven and on Earth on their account.

3dly, *What frequent serious Thoughts should we have, about our eternal Estate?* Seeing we are but a little distance from, and constantly hastening towards either eternal misery or eternal happiness, how much should we employ our minds about eternity! How often ought we to make this the subject of our meditation! With what exactness should we consider the relation our present behaviour hath to that happiness, or that misery, which will be every way compleat, and will never admit such succession as doth necessarily attend every thing to which

which we attribute either of those names in this present state! With what faithfulness should we represent to our selves those accounts and descriptions God hath given us in his Word, of the everlasting rewards and punishments which shall be dispensed in the future World! With what attention should we often view and survey the same, that our hearts may be mightily affected with them! How inquisitive should we be, by examining our states, our hearts, our lives, to know what our portion shall be for ever! What kind of eternity we shall be consigned to, upon our departure hence! Can we avoid reckoning it the highest degree of indiscretion and madness, to pass away our short time inconsiderately, and without any due concern, whether we shall be for ever in torments, or eternally blessed? Seeing we have so little time to live here, what care should we take to escape everlasting misery, and to prepare and provide for our inheriting eternal joy and glory? If the thoughts of eternal misery, and eternal happiness, will make no impression on us, cannot influence our Hearts and Lives, can produce no good effect on us, especially when we consider, that we have but a little time in which we can employ our selves for the avoiding of the one, and making the other sure to us, our case is desperate. May the thoughts of eternity constantly abide with me, and have such a mighty power over me, as to cause my conduct to be very regular at all times; that I may not spend my short life in treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath; but that I may with great vigour follow after, and improve in that holiness, without which, none shall be admitted to the glorious and eternal Recompences, which are laid up and reserved for them, who heartily love, and faithfully obey the most holy Jesus.

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The only space and time that is allotted us to prepare and provide for everlasting blessedness, is the short life we live in this World : The present life is our only state of trial ; we must not, when we are once dead, come back again, and live another life here, to rectifie the errours and faults of our former life. If we mis-spend our time now, live in sin and disobedience, and go impenitently out of this World, we shall have no more time allowed us to mend our miscarriages. *He that goeth down to the grave, shall come up no more ; he shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more,* Job 7. 9, 10. We cannot do any thing after we are dead, that will contribute to our happiness, if we be regardless of it, and take no care to prepare and provide for it, whilst our present life is continued : *The night cometh, when no man can work,* John 9. 4. *Behold, now is the accepted time ; behold, now is the day of salvation,* 2 Cor. 6. 2. We are to give an account of what we do here in this World, and we must be sentenced according to what we do in this present Life. *We must all appear before the Judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad,* 2 Cor. 5. 10.

It is an unspeakable mercy to good men, that when they are dead, they shall not come again to live here, as they did before, but are perfectly freed from all the sins, temptations, infirmities, and sufferings they formerly experienced and complained of, and do enter into endless peace and rest ; all tears are wiped from their eyes, they rest from their labours, and inherit the peace and comfort promised to the good works they exercised themselves in, Rev. 21. 4. and 14. 13.

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We have no reason to think, that bad Men who die in their sins, would benefit themselves as to eternity, if they might come back, and live another life of trial upon Earth; for the horrors and torments of the other World do not change their natures, and make them holy; if they did, Hell would abound with Saints; their Souls retain the same vicious Inclinations, and increase them which were most predominant in them here: And were they to return to their old Bodies, and live again in this World as long as they did before, with those vicious Inclinations, which are become more impetuous than they were formerly, what could be expected but that they would act over their old sins with greater fury than they were wont? Men do, and will always act according to that Principle which doth most powerfully sway and determine them. Why should we think that wicked Souls departed, might they return again to their Bodies, would make any better use of the Gospel, than those wicked Persons do, who apprehending themselves near the Grave and Hell, are filled with unconceivable horrors, and express the loudest resolutions of being religious holy Persons, if they may but recover and live a while longer; and yet are no sooner restored to Health, but they cast off the remembrance of what they vowed, and become more vile and wicked than they were before.

It is a great mercy to the World, that wicked Men are not permitted to come back, and live another number of years on Earth; for might they return to spend more years here, seeing their Tempers and Inclinations would be such as they were before, only more strong and inveterate, what could be expected from them, but that they would be little better, than so many incarnate Devils?

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Torments do not of themselves change People's Natures, *Rev.* 16. 10, 11. Those in Hell do not love God and Christ; they desire not Grace and Holiness, but are as averse to these things, as implacable Enemies to them as ever they were. The rich Man, *Luke* 16. 24. begged not for Grace to prepare and make him meet for Heaven, but for a *drop of Water* for a sensual Gratification. And no doubt might he have had his choice, he would have been for as delicious and large Draughts, as ever he took when he was on Earth.

How much doth it concern us to live so at present, that we may be sure to be happy when we die? For if we be unprepared at death, and miscarry upon our departure out of this World, we shall miscarry for ever.

We should be much concerned, and earnestly desirous that we may be effectually regenerated, that that gracious change may be wrought on our Souls by the Spirit of God, which cannot be effected by any inferiour Agent, and which is indispensibly necessary to our being made meet for everlasting Blessedness. We should take great pains to understand and know all the Duties which concern and belong to all Christians in general; and to know distinctly the Duties which pertain to our selves, considering our particular Relations, and those Duties which we should in a peculiar manner attend unto, by reason of the state and condition the Providence of God doth place us in; we should be sure to perform them faithfully, and live in the constant doing of what God makes our Duty; that by our performing every thing as near as we can, in the manner God appoints, and as an act of Obedience to him, we may have the clearer, and more sensible and comfortable Evidence, that we are

are in a Reconciled state, and are in good earnest working out our own Salvation.

These are Matters we ought to concern our selves about, and apply our selves to, without delay, because we have only this present, short and uncertain Life, wherein we can mind and attend unto them; the Wise Man urgeth us to improve this Consideration (that the present Life is the only time that will be granted us to prepare for future Happiness) to provoke and quicken us to use our utmost diligence, in the present doing of what we understand to be necessary or useful for that purpose, *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor Wisdom in the Grave whether thou goest, Eccles. 9. 10.*

We should be very importunate with God, and very serious and diligent in using those methods he doth appoint, in order to our partaking of that mighty influence of the Holy Spirit, whereby the Soul is delivered from its native and habitual blindness and disorder, and is directed and determined to its true and sovereign Good. And when we experience the exceeding greatness of that power, God doth exert in working True and saving Faith in People, it must be our care to preserve and exert this Divine and Gracious Principle, in all those acts and ways he doth appoint us.

That *Holy Impression* and *Divine Principle* the Spirit of God doth impart unto, or work in the Soul, whereby its *moral state* is altered, doth invest it with power and authority over the *animal part*, it enables and obligeth it to govern the animal part, and to order it in all its motions which pertain to and fall under a *free and voluntary conduct*, and to make use of them in such ways as are proper to express

concerning DEATH.

press its own inward actings, and as are by Divine appointment assigned, as outward means by or through which we are to expect more liberal communications of Divine Influences from the Holy Spirit, for the greater improving of that good and excellent temper, the Soul is already wrought unto.

These external Acts are enjoyed us, because of the union our Souls have at present with our Bodies, and because of our Relation to, and the converse we have at present with other persons. But these outward acts will not profit us to our future Happiness, any farther than they are accompanied with those inward actings of our Souls, of which they should be sensible Expressions. Therefore we must be sure not to neglect these external instances of Obedience unto God, but to be very sedulous and diligent in performing them as occasion requires, so to be very careful that we perform them always as Acts of Obedience to God, and that they flow from, and be the real and genuine fruits and effects of our Souls exerting themselves under the influence and conduct of the Divine Impression fastned on them, in proportion to the occasions which are ministred unto them.

The more our Souls do exert themselves with an agreeableness to the nature of those objects, to which this Divine Principle doth incline them, and with a proportion to the occasions which do occur, and do extend their Influence to the just regulation of our external actions, the greater Mastery they do acquire over, and the more they do weaken that opposition they meet with from the Animal part, and from the impressions of sense. The greater abundance of fresh supplies they receive from above, for the maintaining of their present Conquests, and for the making their future Victories more easy, the
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more comfort they feel at present, and the more abundant will their Recompences be in the next World.

It must also be our great care, that having begun in the *Spirit*, we do not end in the *Flesh*, but continue and persevere in well-doing as long as we live; if the last part of our Life be wicked, we shall everlastingly perish, and there remains no remedy, Judgment will find us in that very state we are in, when we leave this World. *When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doth, shall he live? all his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned, in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die, Ezek. 18. 24.* The use Job made of this Consideration, that Men have no more time in which they can prepare for Eternity but this present Life, is eminently worthy of our Imitation. *If a man die, shall he live again?* that is, most certainly he shall not have another Life of tryal, or more time to provide for his being Happy for ever; and therefore he fixedly resolved to make it his great business as long as he lived, to mind Eternity, and provide for his future welfare. *All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come, Job 14. 14.*

How extremely dreadful is their Case, who live without any serious concern for their future Happiness, and put off Repentance till they come to die? Those who do Resolvedly persist in vicious Courses, depending on a *Death Bed Repentance*, are in such a fearful case, I do not know any ground we have to hope, that they shall escape the *Damnation of Hell*.

Those who have spent their days in carelessness and

and Sin, and when they are sensible they must speedily Die, being full of Horror, do cry out against Sin, from apprehensions of approaching Wrath and Torment, and make Passionate Protestations and Vows, of leading Holy, Religious Lives if they may recover, are in such a state, I know not any reason we have to judge comfortably of them; there have been so many instances of persons in such a condition, who recovering their Health, have not lived one jot better than they did before, that we can have no warrant to lay any great stress on such extorted clamours; I cannot offer any thing for their comfort as long as they continue in that state, what their condition will be hereafter, is not a matter for me to be positive in: They are going to, and will appear before a most Righteous Judge, who will not do them any wrong, if there be any favourable, any extenuating circumstance attending them, he will most fully consider and take notice of it, and to him I leave them.

Yet should I see a person on his *Death-Bed*, who had lived a very Vicious Life, expressing a serious hatred of, and indignation against Sin, because of its contrariety to the Holy Nature of God, and contradiction to his pure and sacred Laws, earnestly desiring and longing after Grace and Holiness, that he may be made like God, and meet for communion with him, and who appears to experience so much of the calming and pacifying Influence of the Holy Spirit, as doth dispose and enable him to refer himself to Gods disposal, tho' with much uncertainty, much doubting what the event will be to himself, yet wholly depending (if Mercy may be found for him) on the Merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, I should be very unwilling to entertain any

any hard thoughts as to his future estate.

Lord make me wise in time, that I may not have the whole of my work to do, when time will cease to do it in; nor have the hardest part of my work to do, just when Time and Life must both expire! give me grace so to spend this present Life, that at any time, I may with satisfaction, resign my Soul at thy Command.

The true Reason why we are afraid, and unwilling to Die at any time, is *at least a suspicion*, that we have not behaved our selves here as we ought, and are not in a Preparation for Happiness in the next World, together with a perswasion that after we are dead, there is no preparing for a happy Eternity. If my Love to Christ was as strong, and my desires after him were as ardent as *S. Pauls* were, could I say with as much truth, and with as great assurance as he did, *I have fought the good Fight, &c.* 2 Tim. 4. 6, 7, 8. I do not doubt, but I might think, and speak of, and look for my Departure with a Satisfaction like to his, tho' I were certain my Soul would be separated from my Body in as Truculent and Violent a manner as his was: Were I certain my Sins are pardoned, my Peace is made, and that my Soul will no sooner be loose from this Earthly Tabernacle, but it will be in the Embraces of my Dearly Beloved Saviour, with what Transport should I welcom the Message of Death? How should I insult over that Enemy (when I believably reflect on the glorious Resurrection of Believers) to which Sin only gives a Sting! which Sin alone cloaths with Terror! *O Death where is thy Sting, O Grave where is thy Victory? The Sting of Death is Sin, and the strength of Sin is the Law, but thanks be to God who giveth us the Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. 15. 55, 56, 57.*

MEDITATION VIII.

Concerning a Comfortable Death, and how we may attain to Die comfortably.

IT is the certain Priviledge of every sincere and good Christian, that he shall Die safely ; his Soul shall no sooner get out of this Sinful, Troublesom World, but it will inherit everlasting Peace and Rest. This is the Immutable Determination, the most faithful and expresse Declaration of that God who cannot Lie, *Blessed are the Dead which die in the Lord from henceforth, yea saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their Labours, and their Works do follow them, Rev. 14. 13. Mark the perfect Man, and behold the upright, for the end of that Man is Peace, Psal. 37. 37.*

It is not the Lot of every good Man to be in bodily ease, or rather free from Corporal pain, nor to enjoy a great inward calm and serenity in the spaces just preceeding the *moment* when his Soul doth depart and go into the Mansions of Light and Blessedness.

Some who have been eminent examples of singular Virtue and Piety, who have been feasted a long time together, without any considerable interruption, with the Joys of a good Conscience, have had the sharpest Combat in their *last Hours*, they have then been assaulted with Dreadful Temptations, have sustained very strong Agonies, and have spent their latest Minutes under Terrifying

Apprehensions. Some, whose last Trials have been the keenest they have experienced in all their lives, have been suddenly refreshed with new Light, and have expired in an Extasy of Joy: But others have continued under the Cloud, and have appeared to yield up their Souls, whilst Mourning, and in Anguish. They have gone to *Paradise* from a State very like to that *St. Paul* was in, presently after his Descent from the *Third Heavens*: The Messenger of Sathan hath not ceased to *Buffet* them, till their Souls were arrived thither, where neither Sathan nor any of his Messengers either can, or dare to come. Those who have often vanquishd and conquered their Adversary by a *Vigorous Resistance*, have at last made their *Escape* by *Flight*, his violent and Malicious Assaults having contributed to the dissolving of the Union betwixt their Souls and Bodies, their Souls have had an opportunity to make their escape to the *True Sanctuary*, to the sure City of *Refuge*.

On the other hand, some who live Sensual, Vicious Lives, who spend all their Time in Vanity, Sin and Folly, do die away *Insensibly*. They feel no pain, nor are troubled with any Remorse, their passage to eternal Torments, appears as *soft*, yea sometimes as *pleasant*, as they studied to make their Path from one Diversion and Folly to another; they pass from Time into a Horrid Eternity, just as a Fool may roll down an easy smooth *Descent*, till he actually falls into a roaring *Tempestuous Gulph* he never thought of.

Some bad People die without any Regard to, or concern about their future estate; Nature is quite exhausted in them, and their Life goes out just as a feeble Flame, which hath no Oil to feed it.

Others

Others dye in the height of a wild Confidence, and unreasonable Presumption, breathing out their Souls in the heat of an *Enthusiastick Paroxysm*. They drop into everlasting Flames under the most Malignant Operation of a *strong Delusion*. A Phantastick Opinion has the same effect on their Souls, the Poison of that venomous Creature hath on those peoples Bodies, who being bitten by it, their Blood and Spirits are put into such disorder, they never leave dancing and laughing till they are dead.

When the Case of either a good Man, or a bad one, at the point of Death is such as hath been spoken of, it proceeds usually from Ignorance or Misperwasion of the truth of their Estate, both as to the one and the other of them. This Ignorance and Misperwasion in good Men, ordinarily springs from *Bodily Distempers*, or *Violent Temptations*, or as most usual, from *both together*. In bad Men, they are the effects either of *affected Unbelief*, or *wanton Credulity*.

Bellarmino relates a very formidable Story of a Man he knew, who near the close of his Life did talk of the Devil and Hell, and of his going presently to them, with a very strange sort of indifferency, without any emotion or concern about the matter. The Person being on his Death-bed, and exhorted to make his Peace with God, replied, *Sir, I have something to desire of you for my Wife and Children, but as for my self, I have nothing to desire on my own behalf; for I am hastening to the Devil, and be damned: and this he spake with as much unconcernedness, as if he had discoursed only of his travelling to the neighbouring Village*. Now as to this Instance, If the Man was in his Senses, I think he did not understand what he spake; that is, he uttered those

words as words of course, which had no determinate signification with him: he had no rational perception of those Idea's, the words he used were designed to express. For I do not apprehend it possible, for a rational Creature to have distinct and clear Idea's of what those words as they were placed by him, do stand for, and signify in common acceptation, but they must make very strong Impressions upon him; or that a Man can have such Impressions on his Soul, but he will in some proportion discover them. A Man may obliterate Notions once received, and afterwards use those words, by which people commonly express and signify those Notions; or he may speak words he never understood, without any emotion; but it is not in our power by any Art, to hinder clear distinct Idea's of what we apprehend to be in the highest degree evil and hurtful, or good and useful, from having suitable Effects on us. What the Man said, might be a great and terrible Truth, tho' he did not understand what he said. And the formidableness of the Story consists in this, That being in his Senses; he should know how to place Words of such extraordinary moment together in such order, and neither understand what they meant, nor the truth of his own Condition.

Our future Happiness doth not depend on our being in an easy, calm, undisturbed, serene Estate, just before we leave this World. It is not indispensibly necessary to our inheriting everlasting Glory, that we have Fore-tastes of Heaven; immediately before we go thither. *Children of Light* do sometimes walk a great while in *Darkness*; very often, yea for the most part; they lay not aside all their Fears and Doubts but with their Bodies: and some Wicked persons may pass along unconcernedly, and have

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Thoughts at all, or no uneasy Thoughts at all about Eternity, till their Time is over. But notwithstanding both Good men and Bad men may mistake, and pass a wrong Judgment on themselves at present, that will not alter their future Estate. People will not be Justified or Condemned in the next World, according as they think well, or ill of themselves in this World; but the Judgment of God will be according to *Truth*.

Yet it greatly concerns us to do all we can, to provide not only for our safe, but our comfortable Passage hence: that we may arrive at, and be preserved in such a Temper, as to wait joyfully, and long affectionately for our Dissolution: that our Souls may be so delighted with the Prospect of Eternal Glory, and the View of our own solid substantial Evidences of our Right and Title to it; that we may at present greatly rejoyce in the Hope of it, and with unexpressible pleasure entertain and welcome the approach of the Time when, and the Messenger by which, it shall please the most wise and good God to call our Souls from these Bodies, and order them to take possession of the Glorious things he hath prepared for them: that our Faith, and Hope, and Love may be raised to that degree, as may vanquish all our Fears, and make us more willing to cast off all concern for every thing here, than any Prisoner can be to leave a dark Dungeon, and part with his Fetters, that he may go into a pure, light Air, and enjoy his full Liberty.

Tho' we cannot but have some concern for our Bodies, yet a full Assurance of *Heaven*, and a strong vigorous Faith of their *Resurrection*, may make us very desirous to lay them aside for a while, that our Souls may go immediately into the Divine pre-

sence, and inherit Pleasures for evermore; and that they may be new fashioned, and made every way fit for our Souls in their best Estate. Who loves a torn Garment to that degree, he will not contentedly put it off at Night, when he is sure it will be mended, and made more comely, and more useful for him to put on again the next Morning? The Body is at best in this Estate, but a great Incumbrance to a truly Devout and Heavenly Soul. That Man does not love God, and Christ, and Heaven so well as he ought, who is not willing to leave his Body a while, for what is so infinitely better than it; especially being so well assured, that his Body shall be freed from all its Infirmities and Imperfections, and be rendred every way convenient for his Soul to use, in his noblest Services and Operations. Is any Man so in love with a Ruinous House, as not to be willing to go out of it, for a little time, to a much more convenient Abode, till it is repaired or new built, and made in all respects meet for his pleasure and service? Consider what *St. Paul* saith, 2 *Cor.* 5. 1,2,3,4,6,8.

A Good Man may feel much Pain, he may be exposed to much Ignominy and Reproach amongst Men; painful Diseases, and cruel shameful Usage may occasion the Dissolution of Nature in him, yet he may leave the World with wonderful and unexpressible cheerfulness and comfort. He may experience and feel an inward Joy and Pleasure, an Exultation and Triumph within himself, that unconceivably exceeds All, that to outward shew makes the most Tragical Appearance. He would not part with his inward Peace, Comfort and Joy, to be delivered from the Pain he endures, and the
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Reproach that is cast upon him ; but would rather endure more, as to his Body and Name ; yea tho' it could be heightened and aggravated a thousand degrees farther. See *Heb. 11. 35.* *Stephen* left this World with unaccountable Comfort, when his Enemies testified their Detestation of him, by stopping their Ears ; expressed their Indignation, by gnashing of their Teeth ; and vented their Fury, by casting whole showers of Stones against him. To dye easily, respects the Body ; to dye comfortably, respects the Soul.

For a person to dye comfortably, is to have his Soul at its Departure hence, possessed with a strong and just sense and perswasion of his own Integrity, exerting it self in fervent desires to be with Christ, and in the lively vigorous Acting of Graces suitable to the present occasion : such as praising God for, and rejoycing in his assured Right thorough Christ to Glory, fiducially commending himself to the Divine Mercy, and charitably imploring Grace for others. How desirable is it to leave this World in such a frame of Soul ? Who would not desire to go hence acting of Grace in that manner ? looking upon all things here with contempt ; ravish'd with the *Jays* and *Glory* just ready to be conferred. What diligence then should we all give, that we may be in a condition to part from this World in this manner ; at what time soever so ever it shall please God to lay his command on us to dye ? May I pray over *Balaam's* words, with a temper of Soul every way agreeable to the proper import and sense of them ! *Let me dye the Death of the Righteous, and let my last end be like his !* *Numb. 23. 10.* When I am to expire, and give up the Ghost, may I with Holy *Stephen's* Assurance commend my Spirit into the Embraces of the Lord Jesus.

A diligent attending to, and observing of these few following *Directions*, may contribute much to your Dying with great Comfort.

1. *Be very careful to preserve a good Conscience.* He that doth distinctly understand what God makes his Duty, and doth with accurateness perform it, is in a good and safe estate. *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them*, Joh. 13. 17. He that often impartially compares his own Heart, Practices, and course of Life, with the Rule, by which he is to govern himself, is in a condition to make a true Judgment of the Estate he is in; and upon his perceiving clearly, that he hath acquitted himself, as God did order him, he feels the satisfaction of having approved himself *a good and faithful Servant*; he can truly apply the Divine Promises to himself, and has an exhilarating sensation of his being in a Happy Estate. He that takes a due care to preserve himself in this posture and course, as he will constantly feel the Comfort that doth result from the good estate he is in, and the Judgment he makes of it; so his Comfort will abound from his looking forward, and the assurance he will have, that God will certainly make known his Approbation of him, by a solemn assigning him to inherit the Blessings, he hath promised to those who govern themselves at present as he appoints; with what Satisfaction and Joy may that Man wait for his Departure hence, who constantly maintains a good Conscience; with what freedom from any timorous, damping Resentment, may he at any time yield up his Soul unto his Beloved Saviour? A truly Holy, Regular, Heavenly Conversation, is a most certain undeniable Evidence of our having a true and infallible Right to Glory, and a sure unquestionable knowledge of our
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having behaved our selves in that manner, is a never-failing Spring of Comfort. *This is our rejoicing, the Testimony of our Conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity; not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world: 2 Cor. 1. 12. see 1 Joh. 3. 19, 20, 21.* If we would go off this Stage in such a joyful triumphant manner as St. Paul did, we must strictly observe that Course, to which he resolved to addict himself. *Herein do I exercise my self, to have always a Conscience void of offence, toward God, and toward men. Act. 24. 16.* Hereby we shall be invincibly perswaded of our Interest in Christ, and assured that neither Death, nor any thing else shall be able to separate us from the Love of God in Christ. *Rom. 8. 38, 39.* We shall be so far from apprehending any frightfulness in Death, we shall reckon it a part of that Portion which belongs to us as we are Christ's. *1 Cor. 3. 22.* Yea we shall judge it so much a more valuable part of our Portion, as it stands more nearly connected to, and is made indispensably necessary to our possessing our whole Inheritance.

2! Carefully cherish and improve all the Motions and Workings of the Holy Spirit. It is the Character of a True Christian, that he hath the Spirit of Christ, *Rom. 8. 9.* Now as the Holy Spirit doth work that Gracious Change in a person, whereby he is effectually Regenerated, and made a new Creature; so he doth preserve and maintain that Sacred Principle of Divine Life he hath imparted, by his continued Influences. By his special efficacy he doth advance and carry on what he hath wrought, till it arrives unto its last and utmost Perfection, *Phil. 1. 6.* Our great Care must be, that we do not grieve

this Holy Spirit, nor quench his Sacred Motions, but entertain and cherish them, and improve them diligently to those good and excellent ends, they directly aim at, and for which they are originally intended.

This is the way to be favoured with that great and blessed privilege of being sealed to, and assured of our compleat Redemption, of being honoured with the most certifying Witness and Testimony of the Holy Spirit that we are the Children of God, and shall be Coheirs with Christ in the heavenly Glory; which yields the highest and fullest assurance we can desire, and our Natures are capable of, that we shall be infallibly blessed, *2 Cor. 5. 5. Rom. 8. 16.* This Testimony of the Holy Spirit alters the countenance of Death, makes all that is ordinarily frightful in it, to vanish and disappear; presents it with so amiable an Aspect, that the Soul is filled at its approach, with so ravishing a pleasure, none can form an Idea of it, but those who do experience and feel it, *Phil. 4. 7.* The person God doth thus Honour, hath an assurance of his own Salvation, like to that he hath of the Truth and Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, which riseth as much higher than the satisfaction spoken of under the former Head, as a conclusion drawn from two Premises, one of which consists of a portion of Divine Revelation, and the other a Proposition, which comprizeth a persons own Experience, falls below the certainty of Divine Faith, strictly so called. He that believes the Divine Authority of the Holy Scripture, purely on the account of external Arguments, cannot be properly said to believe it with a Divine Faith, but he only who

who believes it because the Spirit of God doth inwardly testify and witness it to him. This gives him a personal Assurance, that much exceeds what can result from all those Arguments which can be pleaded with others, to effect in them a rational Conviction, tho' it have not the same, or any cogency for the satisfying of others about that matter. That Man who believes with a Divine Faith, That whosoever truly repents, believes in the Lord Jesus, and heartily obeys the Gospel, shall be saved; and then impartially examining himself, his own Heart and Life, finds, that he doth really do so, hath a great deal of solid Reason to conclude and persuade himself, that if he persevere in that Estate, he shall be saved. He hath abundant rational ground of comfort: But this doth not amount to Divine Faith. But he that hath the Testimony of the Spirit of God, that he is the child of God, and shall be saved, doth believe it with a Divine Faith truly so called. And if this Testimony of the Spirit is vouchsafed to him in the last part of his life, he will enjoy the highest measure of comfort at, and in Death, that is possible.

This is not the privilege of every sincere Christian. God dispenseth this Testimony of his Spirit as seemeth good unto himself: Yet every Christian should do what he can, that he may be in a disposition to receive such a Favour, if it shall please God to vouchsafe it. And I cannot think of any way more proper, or more likely to dispose us for such an Accumulation of Peace and Joy at the last, than this, of observing and tenderly cherishing, and making the best

best use we can of the workings of the Holy Spirit throughout our Lives.

3. *Refer your selves constantly to God, and receive all his Allotments with Thankfulness.* Every day resign up your selves and all your Interests entirely to God, to choose your Condition and work for you, and to dispose of your Persons and Interests as he shall think fit; and accept of every thing he orders forth and dispenceth to you, with a great approbation and liking, with a great well-pleasedness of Spirit; and return unto God unfeigned cordial Praise and Thanksgiving for every thing that befalls you. Let us really inure our selves to follow God's Guidance, to perform with diligence and faithfulness what he makes our Duty, to commend our selves to him with affectionateness in every thing, to entertain all his Dispensations with Gratitude and Thankfulness, owning his Goodness and Love in every thing, and we shall be admirably disposed to welcome Death with wonderful satisfaction and peace, at what time, in what manner, with what outward appearance soever, it may make its approach to us. Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by Prayer and Supplication with Thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus, Phil. 4. 6, 7. In every thing give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you, 1 Thess. 5. 18. See Habak. 3. 18. He that faithfully accustoms himself to give God hearty Thanks for every thing during life, from a real approbation and sense

sense of the goodness and love of God to him in every thing, will be in an excellent condition to thank him heartily for Death; He will be raised above the fear of Evil, when the Messenger of Death shall make its Address to him, *Psal.* 23. 4. Get your selves firmly persuaded of Gods particular Providence; that *the very hairs of your head are all numbred*, and that there cannot any thing happen unto you, but he doth over-rule and order the same, *Matth* 10. 29, 30, 31. Acquiesce in, and be very well pleased with the goodness and love of God in all his Providences towards you. Tho' many instances may be of such a Complexion, you cannot discern presently what the main particular intendment of them is, or what they principally aim at, yet entertain them with a suitableness to that love and kindness with which God dispenceth every thing to his own Children. Tho' you cannot see thorough a great many Providences, yet rejoyce in this, that they come from love, and will be over-ruled by your God, to your singu'ar good and advantage. *We know that all things work together for good to them that love God*, *Rom.* 8. 28. Be greatly pleased that God is about to do you some great good, tho in a way you do not understand. Good men are too prone to be offended, and to stumble at Divine Providences, by reason of their putting a Sinister Construction upon them, whereas could they see to the end of them, or did they entertain them as God administers them, they would afford them abundant matter both of Comfort, and for Praise. Those Providences which at their first Appearance have a very dark

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dark and menacing Aspect, do often unfold themselves, and break forth in astonishing Light and Beauty, usefulness and comfort. This is notably evidently in the case of *Joseph*: *Jacob* did misinterpret Providence when he cried out, *All these things are against me*, Gen. 42. 36.

Bradwardine relates a Story from a certain Author, which I have also met with somewhere else, set forth with more advantageous Circumstances, that deserves to be taken notice of, because a considering attentive Reader may receive useful Instructions from it. The Story is to this purpose: "A certain Hermite
" fell into such disorder, from his observing
" that Good Men were afflicted, and bad Men
" did prosper in the World, that he began to
" question, whether there was a God, or if
" there were, whether he was just; seeing hu-
" mane Affairs were no better managed, but
" proceeded in such an unseemly manner. Be-
" ing thus disturbed, he forsook his former
" sort of Life, and betook himself to ramble
" about the World: Upon his setting forth,
" an Angel in the appearance of a Man as-
" sociated himself with him. They travelled to-
" gether the first day, in the Evening they
" come to a certain Persons House, where
" they were entertained with much kindness. In
" the middle of the night the Angel rose, and
" took a golden Cup; which the Master of the
" House had a mighty Affection for, and car-
" ried it away with him in the morning, when
" he and his Companion proceeded in their
" Journey. The next Evening they came to

“ a Person who was so churlish and inhumane,
 “ he would not afford them House-room, but
 “ suffered them to lodge all night in the open
 “ Air. When the Light appeared next mor-
 “ ning, the Angel knockt at that unkind man's
 “ Door, and presented him with the Cup he
 “ had taken away from him, who received
 “ them so kindly: They Travel the third day,
 “ and at Evening meet with one who treated
 “ them very civilly that night. But in the
 “ night the Angel rose, and strangled a little
 “ Infant, which lay in a Cradle. The next
 “ Evening they came to a Person who recei-
 “ ved them very courteously. In the morning
 “ being about to depart, the Angel desired the
 “ Good man of the House, that he would give
 “ his Servant leave to direct them a little in
 “ their way. Who granting his request, they
 “ three walkt together, till they came upon
 “ a Bridge built over a River, from which
 “ Bridge the Angel threw the Servant, who
 “ had shewed them their way into the River,
 “ and drowned him. The Hermite was now
 “ so startled with the things his Companion
 “ had done, he resolved to continue in his
 “ company no longer, because he was such a
 “ wicked Man. Then the Angel desired him
 “ to have a little patience, and he would tell
 “ him who he was, and would shew him, that
 “ all those things he had done, were done by
 “ the order of God, and were most righte-
 “ ous. I am (*said he*) an Angel sent from
 “ God, to teach you, that many things which
 “ seem unjust to men, are most just and good.
 “ We came first of all to him from whom I
 took

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“ took the Cup, who was a sober Man till
“ he had that Cup; but since he took such
“ a delight in drinking out of that Cup, that
“ he did daily disorder and make himself
“ drunk, and God sent me to take away from
“ him the occasion of his Intemperance, that
“ he may return to his former Sobriety, and
“ not perish. I gave the Cup to that wicked
“ Churle who refused to admit us into his
“ House, for God hates him; and he being
“ to have nothing that is good in the next
“ World, he is to have his Portion in this:
“ That Man whose Child I killed, was a ve-
“ ry charitable and liberal Man to the Poor,
“ till he had that Child; but since he hath
“ withdrawn his Bounty from the Poor, and
“ and was become so worldly, as to endanger
“ greatly his Salvation. Therefore God or-
“ dered the Death of the Child; that the
“ Father might not loose his Soul, but return
“ to his former Liberality and Goodness. As
“ to this Servant I have just now cast into
“ the River, and drowned, he was a very
“ wicked Wretch, and had contrived and de-
“ termined, this next Night to murder his
“ Master and Mistress, with all their pretty
“ Children; and because God loves that Fa-
“ mily, he sent me to prevent the Mischief
“ that was designed against it. And now (*said*
“ *the Angel*) go thy way, and do not judge
“ perversely any more of the Providence of
“ God, because good Men suffer, and bad Men
“ thrive and flourish.

Accustom

Accustom your selves to praise God; and give thanks to him under every Occurrence, for the Love he really exerts therein, the Kindness he designs you, and the good he will by that means bring about to you. The Corrections and Chastisements of a loving prudent Father, notwithstanding they are sharp and painful, are kind and beneficial. A bitter unpalatable Potion, may prevent a Sickness that would be very troublesome and dangerous. God is Holy, Righteous, Wise, and Good, in all his Administrations: And these are the true grounds of our ascribing praise to him in, and giving him thanks for every thing, though we cannot trace particular instances to their issues, we greatly mistake, if we think we are to give thanks unto God for no Providence, but what hath a pleasing appearance at first sight, and strikes us immediately with a grateful sensation, or that we are to suspend our thanksgiving, 'till we experience and feel its profitable and joyous Event. He that scarrifies and cups us, when our Disease makes those Methods necessary, deserves our thanks at that instant for the pains he takes to relieve and do us good, as well as when we really find our Distemper was mitigated and lessened by those courses. We should entertain with gratitude, all that God orders and administers in love; receive it just as it comes from God; not according to the Judgment we shall be apt to make of it, when we consider it only in it self, or with relation to the impression it makes at present on our Senses and Imagination: *My Thoughts are not your Thoughts, neither are your Ways my Ways, saith the Lord; for as the Heavens are higher than the Earth, so are my*

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my Ways higher than your Ways, and my Thoughts than your Thoughts, *Isai. 55. 8, 9.* I know the Thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord; Thoughts of Peace, and not of Evil, to give you an expected end, *Jer. 29. 11.* I have heard of one who appeared to spend the greatest part of his Life in a continued praising of God; no Occurrence was observed to happen, that did at all ruffle and disorder his Mind: when any Tidings were brought him, which according to common account are termed evil, he would express himself with a composure that intimated a great well-pleasedness in these words: *Praised, or blessed be the most holy and good God.* What a Noble Heroick Spirit had holy Job, who under such amazing Circumstances, (according to vulgar and ordinary Estimation) could temper his grateful Resentment with such a Strength of Reason, and Power of Divine Grace, as these Words import: *The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the Name of the Lord, Job 1. 21.* Might I attain by the efficacy of Divine Grace, to be confirmed and established in such a frame, I am sure I should live very happily, and I persuade my self I should expect to die very comfortably.

I will conclude this point, with relating a Story from *Thaulerus*: 'An eminent Divine prayed unto God the space of eight years, that he would be pleased to shew him a Man, who might thoroughly instruct him in the way of Truth. On a time, when he was pressing this Request with exceeding great earnestness, he heard a Voice from Heaven, which said unto him, *Go thou to* such

such a Church-Porch, and there thou shalt find the Man who will instruct thee in the way of Truth. There he found a very poor Man, (or a Beggar) whose Feet were covered with Dirt and Mire, and whose Cloths were so torn and ragged, they were not worth any thing. The Divine saluted this poor Man in these words : I grant you a Good-morrow. The poor Man answered, I do not remember that ever I had an Evil-morrow. Then said the Divine, I pray God make you fortunate, or prosperous. The poor Man replied, I was never unfortunate. I wish you happiness, said the Divine. What mean you by that ? said the poor Man ; for I never was unhappy. The Divine not comprehending what he meant, desired him to explain what he had spoken. The poor Man answered, He would do that very willingly : Sir, said he, you bade me Good-morrow ; and I answered, That I never had an Evil-morrow : For when I am hungry, I praise God ; if I am cold, if it hail, snow, or rain, whether the Air be calm, or turbulent, I praise God : Though I am poor, and every one despiseth me, I give thanks unto God. Then you wished I might be fortunate, and I answered, I had never been unfortunate : For I have learned to live with God ; and I am sure whatever he doth must needs be best : Therefore I receive whatsoever he gives forth, or permits to befall me, whether it be prosperous or adverse, sweet or bitter, with gladness : I entertain it as coming from God himself, and reckon it to be best for me ; so that I was never unfortunate. Last of all, you desired that God would make me happy ; my reply to that was, That I was never unhappy : For I have determined to cleave to the Divine Will alone, unto which all my own Will

is

' is so entirely resigned, that I do not will any thing
 ' but what God willeth. Thus I never was unhappy.
 ' Then said the Divine to him, I pray you tell me
 ' what you would say if God should throw you into
 ' Hell. The poor Man repeating those Words,
 ' answered, If God should deal so with me, I have
 ' two Arms, with which I would embrace Him: The
 ' one is true Humility, by which I am united to
 ' Humanity; the other is Love, by which I am uni-
 ' ted to his Divinity: With which I would hold him
 ' so fast, would so embrace him, that he should be
 ' constrained to go with me into Hell. And I would
 ' much rather be in Hell with God, than in Heaven
 ' without him. Thus the Divine learned, that
 ' true Resignation, accompanied with profound
 ' Humility, is the shortest way to God. After
 ' this, he asked the poor Man from whence
 ' he came; who answered, He came from God.
 ' The Divine enquired of him where he had
 ' found God. His answer was, Where I forsook
 ' all Creatures. Where have you left God? said
 ' the Divine. In pure and clean Hearts, and a-
 ' mongst Men of Good-will, said the other. Who
 ' are you? said the Divine. I am (answered he)
 ' a King. Where is your Kingdom? said the for-
 ' mer. It is in my Soul, said the poor Man.
 ' for I know how so to govern all my Senses
 ' inward and outward, that all my Affections
 ' Passions do obey Reason: Which Kingdom every one
 ' must grant is much more excellent than all the
 ' Kingdoms of this World. The Divine ask'd him
 ' then, What it was that had brought him to
 ' this great Perfection. The poor Man answer-
 ' ed, It was Silence, sublime Meditations, and union
 ' with God. And now having found my God, in
 ' him

him I enjoy Peace and Comfort, and have everlasting Rest. 2. Get and keep your Hearts inflamed with Divine Love, by frequent devout Contemplations of I, of Christ, and of the unseen Glory. The Coveries God hath made of Himself in his Word, his glorious Attributes and Perfections; the Person, Life, and Offices of the Lord Jesus Christ; the Descriptions given us of the heavenly State; and the blessed Promises of the New Covenant, are unexhaustible Sources of the richest Comforts to a gracious Soul. If these be well pondered and thoroughly digested, they will yield incomparable Delight through all our Life, and afford the purest Joys in our last Extremities.

Acquaint now thy self with him, and be at peace, thereby Good shall come unto thee, Job 22. 21. Delight thy self also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the Desires of thine Heart, Psal. 37. 34. Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom though we see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with unspeakable and full of Glory, 1 Pet. 1. 8. We live in the Hope of the Glory of God, Rom. 9. 2.

Beget me, O God, effectually by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to a lively Hope of that eternal Life, which thou who canst not lye hast promised. Enable me all my Life to exercise my self in that Godliness, to which thou hast annexed both the Promise of this Life, and of that which is to come. May thy Comforts, most blessed Lord! continually delight my

my Soul: Upon all occasions may I joyfully
 tribute Glory, Honour, Power, Wisdom, and
 Goodness unto thee, the most holy and most gra-
 cious Orderer and Dispenser of all Things: At
 what time I am afraid, do thou cause me to trust
 in thee. Let me ever encourage my self in thee.
 Lord my God: May I lay hold on the Hope
 before me, and hold fast my Confidence in thee
 unto the end. Let me ever look with a lively
 Faith to the Things which are not seen, but
 which are eternal, and joyfully wait for that Glory
 which shall in due time be fully revealed.

*My meditation of him shall be sweet; I will be glad
 in the Lord, Psal. 104. 34.*

William Bullock

William Bullock

THE END.

William Bullock



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